



# QUEENIE'S WHIM

## MISS CAREY.



Michael  
Sadlier







# QUEENIE'S WHIM

VOL. I.



# QUEENIE'S WHIM

A Novel

BY

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"NELLIE'S MEMORIES," "WOOED AND MARRIED,"  
ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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## CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

### CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
TREATS OF ARITHMETIC ... ... ... ...	1

### CHAPTER II.

GRANITE LODGE ... ... ... ...	14
-------------------------------	----

### CHAPTER III.

CATHY ... ... ... ...	31
-----------------------	----

### CHAPTER IV.

THE FEAST IN THE GARRET ... ... ...	48
-------------------------------------	----

### CHAPTER V.

CALEB RUNCIMAN ... ... ...	64
----------------------------	----

## CHAPTER VI.

	PAGE
"YOU ARE EMMIE'S UNCLE!" ...	... 79

## CHAPTER VII.

LOCKED IN ...	... 95
---------------	--------

## CHAPTER VIII.

DARK DAYS ...	... 112
---------------	---------

## CHAPTER IX.

AN ERRAND OF MERCY ...	... 128
------------------------	---------

## CHAPTER X.

"THE LITTLE COMFORTER" ...	... 157
----------------------------	---------

## CHAPTER XI.

CHURCH STILE HOUSE ...	... 169
------------------------	---------

## CHAPTER XII.

MISS COSIE ...	... 190
----------------	---------

## CHAPTER XIII.

A VISIT TO ELDERBERRY LODGE ...	... 216
---------------------------------	---------

## CHAPTER XIV.

	PAGE
IN THE GRANITE QUARRY ... ... ... ...	233

## CHAPTER XV.

QUEENIE'S COUNSELLOR ... ... ... ...	257
--------------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XVI.

FAITH AND CHARITY ... ... ... ...	277
-----------------------------------	-----



# QUEENIE'S WHIM.

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## CHAPTER I.

### TREATS OF ARITHMETIC.

“A little way, a very little way  
(Life is so short), they dig into the rind,  
And they are very sorry, so they say,—  
Sorry for what they find.”—*Jean Ingelow.*

I HAVE always thought the history of the ugly duckling one of the truest and most pathetic of all stories. It commences in the sad minor key, a long prelude of oppression, of misunderstanding. The unknown creature, sombre of plumage, makes no way among its companions; its folded-up beauties remain hidden. The duck-pond represents the world. Amidst plenty of quackery and folly the weaker goes to the wall. By and by

the key changes ; the long neck arches above the weeds ; amid a burst of triumph the ugly duckling sails away into fairy-land a beautiful swan.

After all there is a wonderful moral hidden under these quaint old stories. Beauty and goodness always go together ; the ugly sister, dropping toads instead of diamonds and roses, is only the poetical incarnation of envy and discontent ; truth and mercy and kindness to the aged always unfold themselves under the garb of a beautiful young girl. And so the children glean precious stones of wisdom, odd-shaped and many-colored, out of the fanciful borders of fairy-land.

Queenie Marriott once compared herself and her little sister Emmie to the ugly duckling of the fable. "There must be two of them," she said ; "only it was dubious whether either of them would become swans."

No one at Granite Lodge understood them ; certainly not Miss Titheridge, or the other teachers, or the girls, unless it were Cathy, and even Cathy, much as she loved them, voted them peculiar.

Queenie was only speaking metaphorically when she made this droll simile—the grave young teacher, Madam Dignity, as the other girls had nicknamed her, was sufficiently alive to her own attractions not to fear unjust comparisons.

Without being handsome, Queenie was woman enough to know that her clear brown complexion, white teeth, and brown velvety eyes would win a certain amount of commendation. Queenie's eyes, as she well knew, were her strong point—they were of singular depth and expression. Some one once remarked that they reminded him of brown wells, for they had no bottom. Somebody was right; but they were not mild eyes for all that.

But we must tell how Queenie Marriott became a teacher at Miss Titheridge's, in the select establishment for young ladies at Granite Lodge, where her little sister Emmie was a sort of foundation scholar, or demi-semi-boarder, as one witty young lady described her, with reference to the somewhat scanty scholastic privileges eked out by Miss Titheridge in return for unmitigated drudgery on Queenie's part, and a trifling stipend paid out of Queenie's poor little purse; the contents of

which barely sufficed to find them in decent clothing.

Her own and part of Emmie's board were all the wages Queenie received for her endurance and patient labor; and half of the miserable little pittance of forty pounds a year, left to her by her mother, was paid quarterly into Miss Titheridge's hand, invariably received by Miss Titheridge in the same stony manner, and acknowledged in the same words:—"I hope you and Emily will always be grateful to us, Miss Marriott, for the handsome and gratuitous manner in which my poor sister and myself have befriended you" (the second Miss Titheridge had been dead fifteen years, but it was Miss Titheridge's way always to associate the deceased as though she were still the partner of her labors). "There would have been very few in this mercenary world who would have acted as generously, but, as Caroline always beautifully puts it, we do it 'not to be seen of men.'" After which speech it was odd that the visitors to Granite Lodge, when they were ushered into the school-room, always gazed curiously at the young

teacher, and then at a certain closely-cropped head in the darkest corner, and went out whispering to themselves of Miss Titheridge's Christianity and magnanimity of soul. In more than one case the story turned the scale in the mind of a dubious parent, who after such a recital could not but trust their darlings under the care of so good a creature as Miss Titheridge.

"My dear, she actually supports those two poor orphans ; she assured me that a few pounds are all she receives, and that is pressed upon her. Can you conceive such generosity ?" went on one warm-hearted visitor, the mother of seven female hopes, at least to Miss Titheridge ; "a poor hard-working school-mistress, and treats them as though they were her own daughters."

Queenie and Em and their staunch friend Cathy could have told a different tale, less varnished and highly colored. Miss Titheridge's adopted daughters fared somewhat scantily ; not indeed on the bread and water of affliction, but on bread on which the butter was spread sparingly, on cold tea, on the least tempting cuts of the joint after the young ladies were

served. And they were lodged somewhat coldly, in a large roomy attic, with a draughty window and no fireplace, wherein little Em's hands became at times very blue and chilled—a place much haunted by a sportive family of mice, who gambolled and nibbled through the small hours of the night, with an occasional squeak from Mr. or Mrs. Mouse that roused Queenie, dozing uneasily under the thin blankets, and kept her awake and shivering for hours. These were hardships certainly, but, as Queenie was given to observe somewhat bitterly, she was used to hardships.

Queenie and her little half-sister Emily were the daughters of a clergyman, who held a living in the north of England, at first in Lancashire, which afterwards he had exchanged for one in Yorkshire.

Queenie never recollects her mother, but she did not long miss maternal care, which was warmly lavished upon her by her young step-mother.

Queenie was only seven years old when her father married again; he had made an excellent

choice in his second wife, and, as was extremely rare in such cases, had secured a real mother for his little girl.

Mrs. Marriott was not a judicious woman in some respects, but she was extremely warm-hearted and sensitive ; she would have thought it the height of injustice to make any difference between the children, even though one was her own, and she prided herself on treating them with equal tenderness.

Mr. Marriott was devotedly attached to his wife and children, and yet it could not be said that he was a happy man. He had one fault—he was a bad arithmetician ; throughout his life he never could be made to understand that a pound did not consist of thirty shillings.

It sounds ludicrous, impossible. A highly educated man, and a good Christian, nevertheless it was the case. This mistaken notion spoiled his life, and brought him to his death a broken-spirited man.

Queenie never recollects the time when her father was not in debt ; the sweet domestic life of the Vicarage was poisoned and blighted by this

upas-tree shadow of poverty. Mrs. Marriott's pretty-girl bloom died out under it, her soft cheek grew thin and haggard. It haunted the study chair where Mr. Marriott spent hours of hard brain and heart labor for his people; it spoke despondently in his sermons; it weakened the strong head and arm, and marred their usefulness.

This man was faulty, depend on it; he had begun life at the wrong end; he had been bred up in luxury, and had educated himself to the pitch of fastidiousness; he would preach the gospel, and yet not endure hardness, neither would he lay aside the purple and fine linen that should be his by inheritance.

Fresh from the university, he had commenced life in this wise. Long before prudence would have dreamed of such a thing, he had taken a wife to himself, a beautiful young creature, also a clergyman's daughter, who brought her husband a dowry of forty pounds a year.

After her death, which occurred when Queenie was two years old, there was a long sad interval of confusion and mismanagement. An extra-

gant master and extravagant servants made sad havoc in an income that ought to have sufficed for comfort and competence.

The young widower was in sore plight when Emily Calcott married him, thereby angering and alienating her only remaining relative, a brother, at that time a wealthy solicitor in Carlisle.

“Heaven forbid that you should do this thing, Emily!” he had said to her, not unkindly, but with the hardness habitual to him. “If you marry Frank Marriott you will live to rue the day you ever became his wife; thriftless, extravagant, and already in debt they tell me, and burthened with a child. Pause a moment before you decide, and remember that you must choose between him and me.”

Emily Calcott paused many moments before she consented to shake off the dust of her brother’s house, and shut out from him the light of her fair face, the only one his crabbed and narrowed nature ever really loved. But Frank Marriott was a goodly enough man to look upon, and had dangerous gifts of persuasiveness; and pity in her

soft heart was even stronger than love, and he seemed so helpless, left with his little child ; and so she married him. She had walked, poor thing, open-eyed into a very pitfall of shifting perplexity. From the very first she found herself entangled in a web of every-day worry and annoyance ; small debts grew larger and widened pitifully ; and so the woman's honest soul grew faint and weak, and no purpose, however strong, and no effort, however well sustained, seemed to extricate them.

It was just that mistake of thirty shillings in the pound that caused the fatal mischief. Queenie, young as she was, soon grasped the truth of it all.

" We are poor because we have never learned to do without things," she said once to her father, whom she loved tenderly, and yet, saddest of all things in a girl's life, whom she somehow failed to honour. She had gone to him like a zealous young reformer, to organize a new regime in that troubled household. Her stepmother was dead—prematurely faded and worn out—and things seemed tending to some painful crisis. " It isn't honest

to do what we are doing ; we must measure our needs by our purse. I am not ashamed of our poverty, or of my shabby dresses," went on the girl, in a hard, proud voice, with a little gasp in it. "Mamma did not mind it, neither do I. But what shames me is to know that we have not paid people, that we never shall if we go on like this. Papa, papa, do rouse yourself, and look into things, and you will see what I mean."

"Yes, yes, child, so I will," he had answered, cowed by her earnestness and by some presentiment of the truth ; but the effort killed him.

He had not been a wilfully dishonest man, he had merely "not learned to do without things," as Queenie put it in her childish way. He was a gentleman, and such things had become the necessities of life to him. The pound had not yielded him thirty shillings after all.

People said the Vicarage was unhealthy, not properly drained and ventilated, or a low fever would not have carried off both husband and wife. But might it not have been that, in the old Biblical phrase, the man's spirit had died

within him, and left him an easy prey to the fever?

Queenie thought so as she sat beside him in those long night watches. "What a fool I have been about money and everything!" she heard him mutter once. Oh, if he had only learned to do without things, how much happier for them all!

It was an unhealthy home atmosphere for a girl to breathe. Queenie grew up with two very prominent ideas: first, that money was essential to happiness, and secondly, that honesty and self-denial were two of the greatest virtues. Poverty is a hard task-master to the young. Queenie became a little hard and reticent in her self-reliance; she made bitter speeches occasionally, and had odd little spasms of repressed passion. But she had two weak points, Emmie and Cathy, and she would have worked her fingers to the bone for either.

Between her and Miss Titheridge there was war to the death. A few of the girls disliked her, two or three feared her, to the rest she was purely indifferent. She was their equal, but because of

her shabbiness and poverty they choose to regard her as their inferior. Quiet disdain, unmitigated reserve should be her rôle for the future.

Neither did she owe Miss Titheridge any gratitude. Miss Titheridge had a conscientious teacher cheap, that was all. She had paid her own and Emmie's board over and over again by hours of ceaseless drudgery and painstaking work.

"She gives me stones instead of bread," she said once to her only confidante. "What do I owe her, Cathy? Has she ever a kind word or look for us? is she ever otherwise than hard on Emmie? It makes me miserable to see Emmie; she is pining like a bird in a cage. Sometimes I think I would rather live with Emmie in a garret, and take in plain needle-work. We could talk to each other then, and I could tell her stories, and make her laugh; she never laughs now, Cathy."

"Hush, Queenie; you are so impetuous. I have a plan in my head, a dear, delightful plan. We shall see, we shall see."

## CHAPTER II.

## GRANITE LODGE.

"O shun, my friend, avoid that dangerous coast,  
Where peace expires and fair affection 's lost ;  
By wit, by grief, by anger urged, forbear  
The speech contemptuous and the scornful air."

*Dr. John Laugharne.*

How Queenie became the under teacher at Miss Titheridge's must be told here shortly.

Queenie was only seventeen when her father died, but she had already formed her own plans of independence. The repressive atmosphere of a companion's or governess's existence was peculiarly repugnant to her taste. Teaching was indeed her forte. She had plenty of patience and industry ; her love of children was deep and inherent ; but she felt that she must seek another channel, where she could work off superfluous energy and attain independence. She would be

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a national school-mistress. Aided by a friend, of whom we must speak anon, Queenie so far carried out her determination that she spent the next two years at a training college at Durham, and had just obtained a second class certificate when new difficulties intervened.

The old nurse with whom she had placed Emmie died ; the little stock of money which had been collected for the orphans by sympathizing friends was diminishing daily. Where could she find a home for Emmie ? It was at this juncture that Miss Titheridge, who knew the Marriots of old, and who was just now in sore need of an under governess, stepped in with a magnanimous offer. Miss Marriott should give her services in return for Emmie's board and education.

Queenie had hours of secret fretting before she could make up her mind to relinquish her cherished independence. Miss Titheridge was personally odious to her. The decorous rules and monotony of the life would oppress and weigh upon her. Still beggars must not be choosers, as her old friend Caleb Runciman often said ; and it was for Emmie's sake. Oh, if Miss

Titheridge would only be kind to Emmie, how she would work for her, how she would show her gratitude!

Futile hope! Before many months were over, Queenie bitterly rued the false step she had taken, and grew sullen with a sense of repressed wrong. Little Emmie drooped and pined in the unloving and uncongenial atmosphere. The poor little sensitive plant grew mentally dwarfed; the young shoots ceased to expand. Queenie could have wrung her hands with anguish when she thought of her own weakness and impotence to avert the mischief. Emmie's bright intelligence grew blunted; a constant system of fault-finding and rigorous punishment cowed and stupefied the child's timid spirit; only kindness and judicious training could avail with such a nature.

Emmie did not grow sullen, her temper was too sweet and mild to harbor resentful feelings; but she became morbid and over sensitive. Deprived of the recreation natural to children, her imagination became unhealthily developed; she peopled the old garret with fancies, and not

infrequently raised a Frankenstein of her own creation.

Queenie sometimes found her cowering in the window recess in the twilight in a perfect stupor of terror, for which she could give no tangible reason. It was dark, and she was afraid, and she did not like to come down into the school-room, as she was in disgrace with Fraulein, and so on. Poor pitiful fragments out of a child's life, small every-day tyrannies, little seeds of unkindness dropped into virgin soil, to bring forth perhaps a terrible harvest.

Queenie's passionate love could not shield the little sister; the two could only cling to each other in mute sorrow, each trying to hide from the other how much they suffered.

"I am only tolerably miserable," Emmie would say sometimes, in her droll, unchildish way. "Don't cry, Queenie; you and I and dear old Caleb will live together some day I know, when I am a woman perhaps, and then we shall forget all our troubles," and Emmie would hide the little blackened hand on which Fraulein's ruler had come down so sharply that day, and say

nothing of the pain, for fear Queenie should fret. But with all her childish troubles, Emmie suffered less than the elder sister. Queenie would lie awake with aching head and throbbing pulses night after night, revolving schemes for delivering them both from the house of bondage, as she phrased it.

And every night Emmie prayed her poor little prayer that she might not hate Miss Titheridge, and that she and Queenie and Caleb might live together in a little house all by themselves.

Emmie was never weary of describing this ideal house. It must have four rooms and a cupboard, and a little garden in front, where they might grow sweet peas and roses.

"I should hate to be rich; should not you, Queenie?" she would say sometimes. "Caleb would not be able to smoke his long pipes then."

Caleb Runciman was the only friend they knew outside the gates of Granite Lodge, for Queenie had long ago broken with the old acquaintances whom she had known when her father was alive. Some had been offended at her independence and unwillingness to take their

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advice, others had merely cooled, a few had forgotten the orphans. Queenie was too proud to remind them of her existence ; but she and Emmie clung to their old friend Caleb Runciman. He was the old confidential clerk of their uncle, Andrew Calcott, who was still the principal solicitor in Carlisle.

Andrew Calcott had never forgiven his sister her marriage with Frank Marriott. She had chosen between them, he said, and must abide by her decision. The hard, jealous nature had received a secret blow from which it never recovered. In a moment of bitter passion he had uttered a terrible oath, which only poor Emily Calcott and Caleb Runciman heard, that neither she nor any child of hers should ever have a penny of his money.

“It is your money, Andrew, not mine,” Emily had answered very sadly and meekly, for after her unfortunate marriage much of her old spirit had died out ; “but you shculd not be so hard on me, my dear,” and as she spoke Andrew Calcott’s cheek had turned very pale.

“Depend upon it, my dear young lady, he

repented of his speech the moment it had passed his lips," Caleb had said more than once to Queenie as he narrated this circumstance, which he was fond of doing with a great deal of dramatic energy. "Aye, that was a terrible oath he took, and enough to blacken any man's soul; no wonder he grows harder every year; and his temper is enough to try a saint, let alone a poor sinner like me, till we daren't answer him for fear of flying in a passion."

Mr. Calcott lived in a large handsome house in Botchergate. Queenie and Emmie had often met him when they walked out in double file to take the air, as Miss Titheridge termed the daily exercise, and Emmie had always shrunk nearer to her sister at the sight of the tall, austere-looking man, who sometimes eyed them so sternly.

Mr. Calcott knew the little girl in the shabby garment, who always walked last in the procession, holding so tightly to her companion's hand, was his dead sister's only child; he knew as well that the older girl was Frank Marriott's daughter, but he never acknowledged the relationship save by a deeper frown.

Poor old Caleb Runciman could only befriend them in secret. On their rare holidays the sisters would slip through the streets in the twilight, and steal into the small, two-storied house, with its dark entry and small wainscoted parlour looking out on the winding street.

How they loved that parlour, Emmie especially, with its slippery horsehair sofa and wooden rocking-chair. The very blue china tiles that lined the fireplace, and the red and drab table-cloth on the little round table, were objects of beauty in her opinion. Caleb, with his watery blue eyes, and cheeks like withered apples, and stubbly grey hair, was the handsomest man she had ever seen. She liked his brown, snuffy waist-coat and silver chain ; his satin stock with its coral pin was simply gorgeous. Had not dear mamma when a little girl sat on his knee, and hugged him as Emmie did, when he slipped the new shilling into her hand on Christmas Eve ? To pour tea out of the little black teapot and partake of hot buttered cakes that his old servant Molly had made was Emmie's greatest treat ; her thin cheeks would grow quite pink with excite-

ment, her large blue eyes, generally so dim, would widen and brighten.

"She looks almost pretty then, Cathy," Queenie would say triumphantly to her friend; "if only Miss Titheridge had not cut off her curls."

Cathy used to listen to this sisterly praise in silence. In her eyes Emmie was certainly a very plain child. She had an old, sickly-looking face, which the closely-cropped light hair did not set off to advantage; besides which, she was angular and ungainly, and her frocks were always too short for her.

Other coins besides the bright shilling found their way into the sisters' slender purses; a shy, hesitating hand would push the shining gold piece into Queenie's palm. "It is for Emmie. Bless you, my dear, that poor lamb is deprived of thousands, absolutely thousands. There, take it; I have plenty, and to spare; it will get her some toy or other." And Queenie, swallowing down the odd lump in her throat, would thank the old man, and go home rejoicing, thinking of the new hat or the warm winter stockings it would buy for Emmie.

Granite Lodge was a large grey house of imposing aspect, but hardly giving one the idea of a cheerful residence, the blank, desolate look being strongly suggestive of a jail or a work-house. One of the girls, the wag of the school, had once chalked up over the door those famous words of Dante, "All ye who enter here leave hope behind," a jest dearly rued by the whole school, and expiated by many a bitter task, the innocent suffering with the guilty. Heavy iron gates clanged to and fro with metallic sound, infusing vague sentiments of alarm in the breasts of timid pupils. The windows were high and narrow; everywhere there were grey neutral tints; the young footsteps echoed drearily on the stone hall and staircase.

It was the weekly half-holiday; the large class-rooms were empty and deserted, save for one occupant. Miss Titheridge's young ladies, escorted by the English and French governesses, had gone down the town to transact all sorts of mysterious business, chiefly in the confectionery and perfumery line. Two or three of them, and these comprised the aristocracy of the school,

were paying visits in the close. The chancellor's daughters, who gave themselves airs, and were consequently much petted by Miss Titheridge, had gone down to the cathedral, and were afterwards to drink tea at the Dean's, in company with a niece of one of the minor canons, thereby inspiring the remaining three and twenty young ladies with secret envy.

Miss Titheridge sat in her snug little parlour with the German governess, who was just then the reigning favorite; Miss Titheridge, like most autocrats, having always a favorite on hand, who were always arbitrarily deposed at the first symptom of independence.

The bright little French governess, Mademoiselle La Roche, had long ago fallen into disgrace, and the heavy-featured, stolid Fraulein Heimer had taken her place.

It was a damp, chilly day in October; a clinging mist pervaded the whole place; the leaves lay in rotting heaps on the garden paths; the black boughs of the almost leafless trees seemed to shiver and creak in their bareness.

Inside the prospect was scarcely more cheering.

A small cindery fire burned drearily in the large class-room, scarcely driving out the damp, which seemed to settle everywhere, on the dim windowpanes, on the globes and bust of Pallas, making Queenie shiver as she bent over the piles of slates and exercises at one corner of the long table.

Across the hall she could hear now and then the pleasant spluttering of logs and clink of tea-spoons; a faint perfume, redolent of tea and toast, was wafted across from the little room where Miss Titheridge and the German governess were sitting cosily in the twilight, with their feet on the fender, and a plate of buttered muffins between them. An hour hence a tempting repast of weak tea and thick bread and butter would be dispensed to Miss Titheridge's young ladies, to be enjoyed as only hungry school-girls can enjoy. But Miss Titheridge was never present on these occasions; her nerves required a certain amount of quiet, and meditation towards the close of the day was necessary to all thoughtful minds. It was a little odd that Miss Titheridge's meditations were always accompanied by a mysterious sound closely resembling somnolence.

As the dusk crept on, Queenie shivered and sighed uneasily over her task ; some harassing thought evidently impeded progress. By and by she pushed the books impatiently from her, and began pacing the room with quick, restless steps, now and then pausing to rest her hot forehead against the window-pane.

"Twice this week," she muttered at last, half aloud. "I must speak, whatever happens ; and yet if I should do harm ? I wish Cathy were here ; but no, we trouble her enough ; I must act on my own responsibility ; I can do anything but stand by and see it. If I were only sure of keeping my temper ! "

Uttering these slightly incoherent sentences, the young governess moved slowly to the door, remaining there irresolutely a moment ; and then, with a sudden determination, walked quickly across the passage, and knocked at the opposite door.

"Who wants me at this unseemly hour ? Oh, it is you of course, Miss Marriott," and Miss Titheridge sat bolt upright, and glared stonily at the culprit through her spectacles.

"Ach, she is always so inconsiderate, this Meess," echoed the sympathizing Fraulein.

Miss Titheridge was a tall, masculine-looking woman, with a spare figure and a Roman nose. Why do strong-minded women invariably have Roman noses?

She was not bad-looking, and was even reported to have been handsome in her younger days, and prided herself greatly on her deportment. She wore rich silk dresses, and her spectacles had gold rims to them, and on state occasions she jangled an appalling array of massive gold fetters on her lean wrists.

Miss Caroline, on the contrary, had been a soft, helpless woman, a great sufferer, and much beloved by those who knew her. During her lifetime she had exercised a gentle influence on the sterner sister. It was noticed that Miss Titheridge was not so hard or severe when Caroline pleaded mercy.

"May I ask what is your errand, Miss Marriott?" observed Miss Titheridge, dryly, and with difficulty repressing a yawn, the long, ivory-coloured hand moving ominously to the lips.

"It is about Emmie, Miss Titheridge," answered Queenie, hurriedly, "She did not mean to be naughty, indeed, indeed she did not, only the lesson was too difficult for so young a child."

"Was this the case, Fraulein?" demanded Miss Titheridge, with a distrustful glance at the young governess.

"Ach nein; Meess has not told the truth; Meess had not given the class. I believe the little one is dull, stupid; does not, will not, do preparation," and the heavy Teutonic face looked obstinate and lowering.

Queenie absolutely loathed this woman, and dreaded her as well. Was she not the present prime minister? Miss Titheridge might have relented; Fraulein never. In vain would poor Queenie protest, and beg off punishment for the innocent little culprit.

"Indeed, indeed Emmie is not stupid; she was so bright, and learned so well; every one told me so; but she is easily frightened. Fraulein does not know how a word, a threat, scares her. The lesson was hard, and her head ached; indeed she never meant to be inattentive."

"Miss Marriott," returned Miss Titheridge, severely, as Fraulein shrugged her shoulders with a movement of dissent, "do you not know by this time how useless it is to bring these sort of complaints to me? I never dispute Fraulein's authority in such cases. If Emmie were naughty and inattentive, she must suffer the penalty of her faults. I am sorry," continued Miss Titheridge, still more severely, "that I hear Emmie is never otherwise than inattentive; she does no credit to her teachers, or to my generosity."

The steady brown light in Queenie's eyes burned ominously; it was evident that she controlled herself with difficulty; the small, nervous hands worked quickly.

"We only ask for justice. Is it just," with an inflexion of passion in her voice, "to shut up a young child in a cold, dark room, without food for hours, because she cannot do the task set her? This is Emmie's only fault, Miss Titheridge."

"Miss Marriott," returned Miss Titheridge, in the freezing tone she used to refractory pupils, "you are forgetting yourself. Fraulein is witness that you are forgetting yourself, and insulting

your benefactress. No further words, I beg of you, except in apology for your intemperate speech. Fraulein has sent Emmie to her room, and there she must remain. Please to return to the duties you are at present neglecting," and Miss Titheridge closed her lips rigidly, as though with the determination to speak no more.

For a moment Queenie hesitated ; a passionate impulse came in the young girl's heart, a longing to tell the women before her what she thought of them, to pour out some of the scorn she felt for their cruelty and littleness, and then, shaking off the dust from that hated place, take her little sister by the hand and go forth into the wide world to seek their fortunes.

Queenie's better judgment triumphed over these wild feelings ; it would only be preparing new miseries and fresh privations for Emmie to take such a step ; they must endure a little longer. She did not dare trust herself to speak, but silently left the room.

## CHAPTER III.

CATHY.

“ She loved me for the dangers I had passed,  
And I loved her that she did pity them.”

*Shakespeare.*

“ Something unseen o'er all her form  
Did nameless grace impart ;  
A secret charm, that won the way  
At once into the heart.”—*Rev. John Logan.*

SOLITARY confinement was a favorite mode of punishment at Granite Lodge ; visits of condolence from sympathizing friends were sternly interdicted. Nevertheless, many small culprits had been much comforted by peppermint lozenges or acid drops, surreptitiously conveyed to them in small screws of whitey-brown paper lowered down to the window. Notes hidden in the centre of a large currant-bun had even been forwarded to the unhappy prisoner ; indeed, to carry provisions

to the incarcerated victim was one of the chief amusements in the school.

Poor little Emmie was not a general favorite, and no relief parties had as yet charged up the garret stairs ; no odd-shaped parcels had been smuggled under black silk aprons, and passed on by sleight of hand under Miss Titheridge's very nose ; nevertheless, comfort was close at hand.

As Queenie closed the door of the little parlour she could hear the voices of the girls in the lower entry. There was not a moment to be lost if she wished to elude discovery. As she sped up the broad stone staircase she could hear the harsh, rebuking tones of Miss Tozer, the English governess, with her favorite “Silence, young ladies, if you please ; no infringement of the rules can be permitted.”

Queenie knew well what she would see as she opened the garret door—the line of stooping shoulders against the light, the childish figure cowering down on the high, broad window-ledge ; but she was hardly prepared for the words that greeted her.

“I am not a bit afraid ; I have said my prayers

twice over ; but I sha'n't open my eyes till you speak."

"Em, darling, what do you mean ?" exclaimed her sister, much startled. "Why it is only I, only Queenie."

A gasp and long-drawn sigh of relief answered her, and then a pair of cold arms were thrown delightedly round her neck, and a still colder cheek laid against her own.

"Oh, you dear old thing to come to me. However did you manage it, with the Ogre and the Griffin at home ?" by which delightful sobriquets Miss Titheridge and Fraulein were often designated.

"Never mind how I managed it ; I was determined to see you for a moment. I shall not be able to stop ; the gong will sound for tea directly. Tell me what you meant just now."

"Oh, it was nonsense ; you will be angry with me," returned Emmie, in a queer, ashamed voice, but nevertheless creeping closer to her sister.

"Am I ever angry with you, darling ?"

"Never, never," vehemently ; "only of course you must think it silly."

"What if I do?" with reassuring calmness.

"At twelve years old one ought to be wiser," returned poor Emmie, in a self-convicted tone. "Of course I knew there was no old man wrapped in a cloak in that corner, only it was so dark, and Jane had forgotten to bring me a candle, and the stairs would creak, and there was such a funny noise, and——"

"Oh, Em, Em!" exclaimed her sister, in such a troubled voice that the child could only hang about her fondly, and promise not to be so silly any more.

"It was so wrong and foolish of me," continued Emmie, penitently, "after all the beautiful stories you have told me about guardian angels; but I suppose I am wicked because I can't bear the dark; and when there is a great silence I always seem to hear voices like little men underground, talking and laughing in a muffled sort of way; oh, such funny little voices, only they are not quite nice."

"Now, Emmie, do you know this is quite absurd," returned her sister, suppressing I know not what pangs of pity and fond terror, and

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trying to speak firmly. "I wonder what mamma would say if she knew her little girl were such a coward, and thought such foolish things. I don't think we ought to be afraid in the darkness which God has made," continued Queenie, whose healthy young vitality knew none of the mysterious terrors that afflict weaker and more imaginative temperaments. "And then we are never alone, dear, never in any sense of the word. I am sure our good guardian spirit would never be allowed to leave us for a moment."

"It would be nice if one saw the angel," replied the child, doubtfully.

"Anyhow we must have faith, dear. I am afraid your head has ached terribly over those horrid lessons."

"Yes, it has been pretty bad," in a patient voice.

"And you are cold ; oh, so cold, Emmie."

"I got the creeps, you know, and that always makes me cold ; but I can bear that," stoically.

"The meat was burnt, and so you had hardly any dinner, and now Miss Titheridge says you must have no tea ; you must be starved, abso-

lutely starved," continued poor Queenie, rocking her in her strong young arms.

"Not quite, I only feel rather sick," returned the little prisoner, bravely.

Emmie would not have confessed for worlds the odd gnawing and emptiness that preceded her feelings of sickness. She was somewhat dainty and fastidious with regard to food, and the burnt flavor had so nauseated her that she had literally eaten nothing of the portion sent her. No wonder she had the creeps, as she phrased it in her childish way, and she was shivering with cold and superstitious terror.

"You are making me miserable," returned Queenie, in a broken voice. "I am punished as well as you, Emmie. Are you sure that you really attend in class? Fraulein declares that you never know your lessons."

"I wish Miss Titheridge would not insist on my learning that tiresome German," sighed Emmie. "She wants me to keep up with May Trever. May is ever so much stupider than I," continued Em, with no special regard to grammar; "but Fraulein never raps her over

the knuckles with a ruler, or gives her disgrace tickets."

"Because May Trever is a canon's daughter," returned her sister, bitterly. "She is not poor, or friendless, or an orphan—three sins for which we must answer. But tell me truly, do you try your hardest to please Fraulein?"

"I do, I do indeed," protested the child, earnestly. "Sometimes I know my lesson quite perfectly, and then, when she looks at me with those hard steel eyes, and comes out with that sharp 'Now, little Meess, now,'"—with a faint, dreary attempt at mimicry,—"it all goes out of my head; and then the mark is put down, and I go on from bad to worse. I don't think I am really stupid, Queenie, but I am afraid I shall get so."

"No, you shall not; you must not," with a shower of healing kisses on the little careworn face. "Hark! there's the gong, Emmie; I must go."

"Must you?" in a dreary voice; and then followed a heavy sigh.

"Listen to me, darling. You shall not be

long alone. Miss Titheridge and Fraulein are going out to spend the evening, and I shall tell Miss Tozer that I have a headache, and must retire early. It will be quite true, you know. Go to bed now, and try to forget that you are cold and hungry ; and then I will come up, and we will have a long, beautiful talk about the cottage, and Caleb, and all sorts of nice things. You won't fret any more, Emmie ? ”

“ No-o-o,” hesitatingly ; but two very large tears rolled down the thin cheeks when the door closed behind her comforter. “ Oh dear, oh dear,” sobbed the child ; “ I should not like her to know how cold and hungry I am. I think I could eat a great hunch of dry bread if Jane would bring it me ; but she is such a cross old thing, and I know she won’t. I wish I had asked Queenie to hide a piece of bread and butter for me. Cathy did one day, and spoiled her pretty new dress, because the butter would not come out. It is half-holiday, or else Cathy would have come up long ago. One time she brought me a Bath bun, and it was so good. I wonder if Queenie would think me wicked if I

asked for something nice to eat in my prayers ? No ; I don't think it would be wicked, for I have not had my ' daily bread ' yet."

Even the sour-tempered Miss Tozer relented with womanly compassion when she saw Queenie's pale face and heavy eyes. The girl could eat nothing. The hot weak tea seemed to choke her. The touch of the little cold hands and face seemed to haunt her. "Cruel, cruel," she muttered once between her teeth. Her hands clenched each other under the table-cloth.

"Emmie in disgrace again ? Dear, dear, this is very sad. I hope all you young ladies will take example, and be more careful with your preparation," observed Miss Tozer, sententiously. "Miss Marriott, I should recommend a little soda and salvolatile. I always find it an excellent remedy for a sick-headache."

"I shall be glad if you can dispense with my services an hour earlier to-night," returned Queenie, hastily. "I think rest will be better even than salvolatile, thank you all the same."

"Just as you please," returned Miss Tozer, frigidly. Prescriptions were her hobby, and woe

to the offender who refused the proffered remedy. But at Queenie's imploring glance she melted into something like good-nature. "Well, you had better try both. I am afraid the themes must be corrected, unless you finished them this afternoon. I have pressing letters awaiting my attention this evening."

"Very well; they shall be done," responded Queenie, wearily.

After all, it was not so much her head as her heart that ached. She went back to her old corner in the class-room, and worked away at the girls' blotted themes, while they sat round her whispering and laughing over their preparation.

It was not a cheerful scene. The two long deal tables were somewhat dimly lighted by oil-lamps, which at times burnt low and emitted unpleasing odours. A governess sat at the head of each table, busied over writing or fancy-work. An occasional "Silence, young ladies," in Miss Tozer's grating voice, alternated with Mademoiselle's chirping "Taisez vous, mes chères demoiselles," followed by momentary silence, soon broken by a titter. One of the girls, indeed, did not

join in either the whispers or the titters, but worked on steadily, and to some purpose, for, to the surprise of her companions, she closed her books long before the allotted hour, and, with an explanatory mention to Miss Tozer about tidying her drawers, left the room unseen by Queenie.

She was a tall girl, with an odd, characteristic face, colorless complexion, and bright dark eyes. She wore her hair in singular fashion, parted on one side, and brushed even over her forehead in a long wave, and simply knotted behind.

Most people called Catherine Clayton plain, but to those who loved her this want of beauty was redeemed by an excessive animation, and by an expression of amiability and *bon-hommie* that irresistibly attracted.

Her figure was erect and striking. She walked, ran, and danced equally well. Movement was a necessity to her; in some moods repose was impossible. In her gestures she had the freedom and unconscious dignity of a young Indian squaw.

Catherine, or Cathy, as she was generally called by her intimate friends, had struck up a warm friendship with Queenie on the first day they met.

Queenie's strange eyes drew her like magnets ; their troubled pathos stimulated curiosity and invited pity. Queenie's pride and independence, her quiet reserve, only charmed the younger girl.

Cathy made swift advances, but they were only repelled by the sad-looking young governess. Cathy, nothing daunted, turned her attention to Emmie, and won her heart in a trice, and from that moment Queenie succumbed.

When Queenie loved, she loved with her whole heart ; half measures were impossible ; she must give entire confidence, or none at all. Her reserve, once broken through, was broken for ever. She soon made her friends acquainted with the chequered story of her past life. She told Cathy the absolute blank of the future was perfectly appalling to her.

Cathy listened and pitied, and started all sorts of vague Utopian schemes that should ameliorate the condition of her favorites.

Her own life had no bitter background. She was indeed a motherless orphan, but she was so very young when her parents died that the cloud

had hardly shadowed her. She spoke of them affectionately, as of some dear unknown friends.

Queenie knew all about Cathy's home—the dull old house at Hepshaw, overlooking the church-yard and the plane-tree walk. She had even pictured to herself the granite quarries, where Garth Clayton spent long hard-working days.

Cathy was never weary of talking about Garth. She would expatiate for hours on his virtues. Was he not the stay and prop of the little household? Did not even Langley, the motherly elder sister, go to him for advice and counsel? The handsome younger brother, long, lazy Ted, was spoken about more seldom.

"Ted is just Ted," Cathy would say sometimes, in reply to Queenie's half quizzical interrogations. "A dear old fellow, of course; but he cannot hold a candle to Garth. Why Garth is a perfect king in Hepshaw. There is no one more respected. The work he does among the quarry-men perfectly astonishes our new vicar. He has classes for them, and teaches them himself, and plays cricket with them, and gets up entertain-

ments and lectures in the school-room. Why, the men perfectly adore him."

"How I should like to live at Hepshaw!" Queenie would answer sometimes, sighing she hardly knew why.

Cathy's descriptions somehow fascinated her oddly. The little straggling market town, with its long, winding street or road; the old Deerhound Inn; the white workhouse, the church and vicarage, standing high, and overlooking the town, and set prettily among plane trees; the dark old 'Church-stile House,' with its gloomy entry, and back windows looking over the ancient monuments and tomb-stones—Queenie could see them all. She could even fancy herself walking up the steep, narrow garden of the Vicarage, between tall bushes of roses and lavender.

"The Vicarage is such an ugly, bare-looking little house; quite a shabby cottage; only Mr. Logan has made it so comfortable, and has added a room to it, such a nice room, which he has made out of the stable. I think you would like Mr. Logan, Queenie; he is quite old, nearly forty, I should think. People say he is very

plain, but I think he has a nice, funny face ; and he is such a character, and wears such old, patched coats, and Miss Cosie always calls him Kit, or “ Christopher, my dear.”

“ And who might Miss Cosie be ? ” Queenie asked, with an amused air ; she dearly loved Cathy’s descriptions.

“ Oh, Miss Cosie was Charlotte Logan ; she was his sister, and kept his house. Every one called her Miss Cosie, even the poor people ; it was a name she got when a child.” No, she could not describe her ; she was a little woman with two big brown curls pinned to her face, and she always wore a soft grey Shetland shawl, and cooed out her words in a soft, plaintive fashion ; she only wished Queenie could see her, and then Queenie sighed again.

These sort of conversations fascinated Queenie ; Cathy’s girlish egotism never wearied her. Garth Clayton was almost as great a hero to her as he was in his sister’s eyes ; she had never heard of such a man. How good he must be ! She used to try to picture him to herself. “ Garth is tall and good-looking ; every one likes his face,” was

Cathy's somewhat vague description. Queenie used to long to hear more.

His handwriting was quite familiar to her; she often admired the firm, clear characters when Cathy read aloud amusing passages from his letters.

How Queenie longed for such a brother! Such a manly, protecting tenderness breathed in every line: in his injunctions to his dear little Catherine not to be homesick or neglect her studies, in his playful hints or merry descriptions of the friends and pets she had left.

"Your parrot is inconsolable, and shrieks disconsolately in our ears from morning to night, much to Langley's annoyance," he wrote once. "Ted threatens to wring its neck. I am quite sorry for the poor thing, and I believe it understands my sympathy, for it sidles up to me and looks at me with yellow, lack-lustre eyes, as much as to say, 'Where's our Cathy, old fellow?' and then clammers up my coat sleeve with beak and claw, and settles itself on my shoulder to be petted, which I suppose I do for your sake, and because poor Polly has no other friend."

"There, is not that like him?" Cathy cried, with sparkling eyes. "He is always so good to any helpless creature; he has sympathy even with my poor Polly. Mr. Logan always says unhappiness or poverty is a sure passport to Garth's heart."

"How sorry he would be for Emmie and me," thought poor Queenie, but she did not put her thoughts into words.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE FEAST IN THE GARRET.

"We fell to work and feasted like the gods,  
Like laborers, or like eager workhouse folk  
At Yule-tide dinner; or, to say the whole  
At once, like tired, hungry, healthy youth."

*Jean Ingelow.*

QUEENIE, absorbed in the themes she was correcting, was not aware of Cathy's absence from the room.

As she toiled on, correcting faulty grammar and replacing obnoxious terms, she was consumed with terrible anxiety. Emmie's thin white face came between her and the page. "What can I do to save her from this life?" was her one inward ejaculation.

She rose quite exhausted with the mental strain when her work was finished. The great stone hall with its one lamp looked dreary enough

as she traversed it ; all manner of weird shadows lurked in the corners of the landing-place. A rising wind moaned in the ivy outside, and shook the bare branches of the trees till they creaked under it ; the moon slid wildly through the black clouds. Queenie thought of Emmie with a little shiver of apprehension, and hurried on.

“ Here I am. Are you tired of waiting for me ? ” she exclaimed, in a tone of enforced cheerfulness, almost before she opened the door ; and then she started back, and a little cry of surprise and pleasure broke from her lips at the changed aspect of the garret.

The scene was certainly unique.

The rickety table, covered with an old red shawl of Queenie’s, was drawn close to the bed ; two candles, one green and the other yellow, burnt cheerily in two broken medicine bottles ; a few late-blooming roses in a soap-dish gave an air of elegance to the whole. A bottle of ginger wine, and various delicacies in the shape of meat pies, tarts, and large sticky Bath buns, were tastefully arranged at intervals, flanked by a pocket

corkscrew, a pen-knife, tumbler, and small tin plate.

Emmie, propped up with pillows and huddled up in a warm plaid belonging to Cathy, regarded this magnificent feast with bright-eyed astonishment; she clapped her hands at the sight of her sister.

"Oh, Queenie, I am so glad you have come. Everything is ready now, only Cathy has gone down to fetch something; she has been planning this delightful surprise all day. Is it not kind of her?"

"Listeners never hear any good of themselves, so I had better make my appearance," interposed a laughing voice, at which Queenie turned hastily round.

"Oh, Cathy, Cathy, whatever should we do without you!" she cried, looking gratefully at her friend.

Cathy's eyes grew a little moist, and then she broke into a low musical laugh delicious to hear.

"Have I not done it well?" rocking herself with merriment. "Not a creature suspects anything. I shall go down presently and pretend

to eat supper. Are not those candles lovely, Queenie ? they make this dismal old room quite cheerful. There, wrap yourself up in my seal-skin, while I help Emmie."

"Isn't it lovely !" sighed Emmie, in a tone of such heartfelt happiness, that Cathy hugged her on the spot. The cakes, the meat pie, the ginger wine seemed enchanted food to her ; the roses, the colored candles, were perfectly radiant in her eyes. "It is just like a fairy story. You are our good fairy, Cathy," she cried ; "I am sure I love you next best in the world to Queenie."

"How I wish Garth could see us !" laughed Cathy. She had enveloped herself in an old grey plaid, and had put one of the roses in her hair, and with her dark hair and eyes looked not unlike a gipsy. "Langley would be dreadfully shocked, but Garth would laugh first and lecture afterwards."

"You are always talking about Garth ; I wish I could see him," sighed Emmie. "You never make us see him, Cathy."

Cathy pondered a moment. "It is not easy to describe people with whom you live ; one is afraid

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of being too much prejudiced in their favor. I don't think I am wrong in calling Garth handsome, because every one says so."

"Every one is sure to be right," put in Queenie, quietly. She did not like to betray her interest, but she had always longed to be able to picture Garth. "He is tall," she hazarded, rather timidly.

"Yes, tall and fine-looking. He is eight-and-twenty, you know : he has a nice thoughtful face, rather pale ; and his mouth is very firm, and shuts tightly, only the moustache hides it ; and his eyes are blue-grey, just the colour I like for a man, and they look kind and gentle ; and then he looks so good, as though he could never do anything wrong or mean."

"He must be a nice man," exclaimed Emmie, enthusiastically. "Then he is not like you, Cathy ?"

"No," she returned, regretfully ; "Langley and I are alike, only Langley is older and worn-looking ; she is two years older than Garth, just thirty in fact, quite an old maid," continued the girl of eighteen, in a tone of profound pity.

"I don't think people of thirty ought to be considered quite middle-aged," remonstrated Queenie, who had long ago achieved her twentieth year.

"Not some people perhaps, but Langley looks dreadfully old; one can't tell how it was that she was considered so handsome. Her features are good, but she looks so thin and worn, and she is paler than I am, and her hair is turning grey. Langley is very nice, and good to us all, but I sometimes think that she leads too dull a life; Garth often says so. I know he will be glad that I am to go home next quarter."

"Oh, Cathy, however shall we be able to endure this place without you?" interposed her friend.

Emmie had waxed drowsy with comfort, and was dozing placidly, and the two girls had curled themselves up for warmth on the bed. Cathy had disappeared for a short time, and had come back with the announcement that the Ogre and Griffin were still out, and the other governesses at supper.

"My having a bedroom to myself makes it

easier to evade rules," explained Cathy. "I have put the bolster and some clothes in the bed, and drawn the counterpane well over them, and Mademoiselle will just peep in and think I am asleep. Oh, what fun it is! How many suppers have we had in this old garret?"

"We shall soon have seen the last of them," returned Queenie, sorrowfully. "I can't bear to think of your going away."

"Poor old Queen!" responded her friend, affectionately. "It is very sad, leaving you and Emmie behind in this mouse-trap of a place. When I go home I mean to talk to Garth and Langley about you. Langley is so good, she is sure to invite you and Emmie for the summer holidays."

"Oh, Cathy, do you think so? do you really think so?" and Queenie almost gasped with surprise and joy. To take Emmie into the country again, to see the little pinched face grow round and blooming in the fine moorland air, to watch her gathering wild-flowers, or scrambling through woods, could it ever come true? For the first moment Queenie forgot everything but her little

sister ; the next her check flushed crimson—she would see Cathy's home and Garth.

"Do you really, really think it will come true ?"

"True ! of course it will. Garth and Langley never refused me anything, and when I tell them about you and Emmie they will be wild to know you. What walks we will have ! I must show you Hepshaw Abbey, and I must bribe Garth to drive us to Karlsmere ; it is such a lovely lake. And then we can go and see the King of Karldale."

"See whom ?" inquired Queenie, in some perplexity.

"Oh, a friend of ours, who is called by that name ; he is a gentleman farmer, and lives near the head of the lake. His real name is Harry Chester, but he is always called the King of Karldale. I am very fond of Harry."

"Indeed," with a slight stress.

"He is such a dear good fellow. I wish I could like his wife half as well."

"Oh, he is married," with a shade of disappointment in her voice.

"Married! very much so, poor fellow, and I don't think he quite likes it. She does not exactly henpeck him, but she is a fine lady, and worries him into doing things he does not like, such as taking her to Paris, and giving her expensive dresses. I am afraid she spends a great deal too much money, and that troubles Harry."

"He should keep her in order then."

"I think he tries; but Gertrude has a will of her own. She frets if he refuse to humour her, and as she is very delicate, and the doctors look very gravely at her sometimes, he is afraid not to give her her way. He sometimes talks to Langley, and she always takes Gertrude's part; why I don't know, for no one else likes her."

"How nice to know people, and to get interested in their lives," sighed the poor recluse. "You have made me quite long to know all the people in your neighbourhood, especially Mr. Logan and his sister."

"Dear Miss Cosie, how she will pet you; and you will be great friends with Mr. Logan. Do you know," in a puzzled voice, "I don't seem to get on with Mr. Logan as well as I did; he gave

me lectures last holidays, and I became a little shy of him."

" And yet you are not one to mind any amount of scolding."

" Of course not, when I don't care about the people who give the scolding ; but that is just it. Mr. Logan looks at one so benevolently, and yet his eyes seem to read you through and through ; and then he goes on in that mild voice of his, till Miss Catherine, as he calls her, either makes a fool of herself or runs out of the room."

" But he has no right to lecture you," indignantly.

" Ah, has he not !" sighed Cathy, and the dark, brilliant eyes looked very serious for a moment. " He says we girls at the present day have such a low standard of right that we never rise above medium goodness, and are too easily satisfied with ourselves. He is always saying we have no great saints now-a-days, and that there can be no St. Augustines without Monicas."

" It is very true."

" Oh, he is such a good man, he makes one feel ashamed of one's self. When he talks one

forgets his patched coat and plain face and bald head. I used to laugh when he pushed his spectacles up in that droll way, but somehow nothing seems odd about him now."

"And he is not married?"

"No, he is an old bachelor, and Miss Cosie keeps his house. I don't think he has ever been in love; Miss Cosie said so one day; he has never been able to find a woman with a sufficiently high standard, I suppose. Even Langley would not suit him, though I believe he thinks very highly of her; they have such long, serious talks. Queenie, do you recollect remarking one day that I never used slang now?"

"To be sure I do."

"Well, he cured me."

"Oh, I can comprehend the purport of the lectures now."

"Yes, he gravely remonstrated with me one day. 'Miss Catherine,' he once said, 'does it never strike you to inquire if the high-born ladies of old time ever talked slang?'"

"Well, I hope you answered him properly."

"No, I was very saucy; I told him I had no

doubt they were often ‘awfully jolly,’ and were fast and slow and spoony no end like other people, and some of the men dreadful duffers and cads.”

“Cathy, how could you?”

“My dear, it was the last outburst. Before an hour was over I was fairly crushed, and took a private vow never to utter anything but the purest English ever afterwards. It was very hard at first, and I had to inflict dreadful pinches on myself, and put endless pennies in the poor’s box, before I could remember; but I am cured since.”

“Yes, and it is such an improvement; I feel very much obliged to Mr. Logan.”

“I took my revenge though,” returned Cathy, looking a little guilty; “I went away without bidding him good-bye.”

“That was hardly kind.”

“So he said. I was very remorseful, and wrote him a penitent little note a week afterwards. The letter I got in return made me feel very small.”

“I dare say he forgave you.”

"Dear old Saint Christopher, I know he did ; but he was terribly hurt ; Langley told me so. I often think we are 'old men of the mountain' to ourselves. How one longs sometimes to throw off one's self and one's faults !"

"You have less than any one I know," returned Queenie, who had a warm admiration for the daring and generous-hearted girl.

"You are wrong," returned Cathy, humbly ; "Mr. Logan knows me best. I do want to be true, as true as I know how to be. I think I hate conventional shams as much as he does ; it is this want of truth in the world that appals one."

"And the lack of kindness," put in Queenie, who had seen the darker side of human nature.

"No, indeed there is plenty of kindness in the world. You have grown misanthropic with hard usage ; you will change your mind when you come among us."

"Yes, you must make allowances for me," she said, somewhat sadly ; "I have been too much in contact with coarse, selfish minds to judge leniently. Cathy, how can women be so censorious

to their own sex? how can they oppress and grieve a little child in the way Miss Titheridge and Fraulein oppress Emmie?"

"It is too bad; but I think Miss Titheridge is obtuse; she does not understand Emmie."

"Do you not think she is changed?" whispered Queenie, with a glance at the sleeping child. "She has grown thinner and paler, and her eyes are so hollow. Caleb noticed it last week."

"She is growing, and needs care," was the compassionate answer, as Cathy rose and folded the shawl closer round the sleeper.

"Care! that is just what she does not get. Oh, Cathy, I think poor mamma would have broken her heart if she had known what was in store for us; she was so fond of Emmie."

"Hush, dear," for Queenie had covered her face with her hands, and was weeping bitterly now. "We will not talk any more; you are weary and over-tasked. You are very brave, my Queen, and seldom break down, but you are too tired to cry to-night."

"Yes, it is wrong of me, but yet it has done me good," she whispered, after a short interval.

They were still sitting together, hand in hand. The green candle had burnt out, but the pink one still burnt cheerily ; one or two of the roses had withered ; the fragments of the feast still reposed on the old red shawl ; the moonbeams stole through the uncurtained window, and played fitfully on the uneven floor ; a little pale face slept peacefully under the old wrapper.

By and bye, when Cathy had left her, Queenie lay down, and drew the warm, sleeping child to her arms. The moon had come out from behind the clouds now ; the stream of pale, silvery light flooded the room ; a perfect halo shone round Emmie's fair hair. Queenie shivered, and gave a faint sob as she saw it.

"She is paler and thinner," she said to herself. "Cathy noticed it, and so did Caleb. They are killing her by inches, and yet they will not see ; they are straining her mind and body, and neither will bear it. Oh, mamma, mamma, she would be better off with you ; but I cannot spare her, I cannot spare Emmie !"

"Are you awake, Queenie ? Oh, I have had such a beautiful dream. I was in a strange place,

and mamma came to me, looking so kind, just like her old self, only grander ; I think she had a crown on her head ; and she took me in her arms and kissed me, just as she used to do, and told me to be good and patient, and to do as you told me, and that she loved us both."

Sleep on, little comforter, in the arms that hold you so lovingly. The strain is lessened, the weary oppression gone. The child's dream, so lovingly told, has brought healing to the weary sister. The unseen guardian watched over them both, the message of love had come to her too, and in this fond belief Queenie fell asleep.

## CHAPTER V.

## CALEB RUNCIMAN.

“ Why what a pettish, petty thing I grow,  
A mere, mere woman, a mere flaccid nerve,  
A kerchief left all night in the rain,  
Turned soft so—over-tasked and over-strained  
And over-lived in this close London life !  
And yet I should be stronger.”—*Aurora Leigh*.

ONE wet evening, towards the end of November, Caleb Runciman stood at the window of his little parlor, straining his eyes wistfully into the darkness.

“ A wild night,” he muttered to himself more than once ; “ it is raining whole buckets-full, and blowing hard. She will never venture out with the child, and so careful as she is too, bless her dear little motherly heart. I may as well tell Molly to make the tea. Dear, dear, how contrary-wise things will happen sometimes,” with which

oracular remark the old man rubbed his hands ruefully together, and turned to the fire.

It was a wild night certainly. A cold, gusty rain swept the streets of Carlisle ; the flickering lamplight shone on glittering pools and dripping water-spouts ; the few pedestrians hurried past Caleb's window, casting furtive glances at the warm, inviting gleam from within.

Caleb's fire blazed cheerily ; a faggot spluttered and hissed half up the little chimney ; the blue china pixies on the old-fashioned tiles fairly danced in the light, as did the Dresden shepherdesses, and the two simpering figures in umbrella courtship on the high wooden mantelpiece.

These tiles were Emmie's delight. She would sit on the stool at Caleb's feet for hours, following the innocent, baby-faced pixy through a hundred fanciful adventures. The little gentleman in the pink china waistcoat and the lady in the blue scarf were veritable works of art to her. The plaster group of the Holy Family, slightly defaced by smoke and time, excited in her the same profound reverence that a Titian or

a Raphael excites in an older mind. She never could be made to understand that the black-framed battle of Trafalgar, painted in flaming reds and yellows, was not a master-piece; there was nothing incongruous to her in the spectacle of Nelson's dying agonies portrayed amid the stage effects of a third rate pantomime; to her the ludicrous was merged in the sublime. It is not in early youth that the one trends so often on the other.

The candlesticks on the little round table were still unlighted, but there was plenty of light to show signs of unwonted preparations. Caleb had robbed the plot of ground he called his garden ruthlessly before he filled the large, wide-mouthed jug with violet and white china asters. The display of preserves in all colors too, not to mention an astounding plum-cake with frosted edges, showed some unusual festivity.

Caleb's round rosy face elongated considerably as he sat in his wooden rocking-chair, warming his hands over the blaze.

"Dear, dear, she'll cry her eyes out, poor lamb, and no wonder; and such a beautiful

cake too as Molly has made," he continued, disconsolately. "I wonder if the old cat would open the parcel if I sent it wrapt up in brown paper, with Caleb Runciman's kind regards to Miss Emmie. I'll lay a wager the poor little angel would never eat a crumb of it. Hark! surely that was not a knock; I dare say it is only the paper-boy."

Caleb's cogitations soon came to an abrupt end. There was an exclamation of surprised dismay in Molly's loud, cheerful voice, then quick footsteps, and the entrance of two dripping figures.

"My dear Miss Queenie and the precious lamb, who ever would have thought it!" cried Caleb, in a voice quite trembling with joy, but shaking his head all the time. "It will be the death of both of you. Molly! Where is that woman? Molly, it will be the death of these dear creatures if you don't make tea quick, and get off their wet things. Miss Queenie, I am surprised at you. Dear, dear, such a night. I must say I am surprised," continued Caleb, trying to speak severely, but with his blue eyes twinkling with animation.

"Emmie fretted so that I was obliged to bring her," returned Queenie, apologetically. "It was wrong, I know; I have been blaming myself all the way; but what could I do?"

"Now, Caleb, don't be cross, and on my birthday too," interrupted Emmie, throwing her arms round the old man's neck. "I thought of your disappointment, and the cake, and the dear old parlor, and I could not help crying; and then Queenie put on her determined face, and said I should go if she carried me. Cathy was so angry with us both, and no wonder."

"No, indeed; I must say I was extremely surprised," reiterated Caleb, who never liked to lose a leading idea, and was fond of repeating his own words. "Mark my words, Miss Queenie, it will be the death of Emmie."

"Nonsense, Caleb," interrupted the child; "I won't have you scold Queenie; she carried me nearly all the way, she did indeed; she said I was quite light. And she is so tired, and she made me wear her cloak, because it was long, and would cover me, and I am so warm and dry; but I know her poor feet

are wet, because her boots are so thin and old, terribly old."

"Oh, hush, Em ; how can you ?" returned her sister, blushing hotly ; "you will make Caleb so unhappy."

" You both of you go near to break my heart," replied the old man huskily, as he knelt down, and took the old shabby boot in his hand. "Miss Queenie, dear, this is not right ; you will lay yourself up, and then what will Emmie do ? Where is the money I gave you last time you were here, when I begged and prayed you to get a new pair ?"

"She bought ever so many things for me," broke in Emmie again. "No, I won't hush, Queenie," as her sister vainly strove to silence her. "I said I would tell Caleb, and I will. I have warm flannels, and gloves, and mittens, and Queenie has nothing ; and she is so cold that she never gets warm all day ; and Cathy says it is a shame."

" Oh, Miss Queenie, Miss Queenie," was all Caleb's answer, as the old fingers fumbled and bungled over their work. Perhaps it was an

unusually large pinch of snuff that dimmed his eyes for a moment, and that obliged him to have recourse to the red spotted silk handkerchief.

Queenie was used to be waited upon by her kind old friend. She allowed her cold feet to be encased in a pair of list slippers that Molly had made for Caleb. A pleasant feeling of warmth and comfort began to steal over her, a luxurious sense of being cared for. Emmie had already installed herself at the tea-tray, and was holding the tea-pot carefully with both hands; her work was cut out for her for the evening. She had to make tea for Caleb and Queenie, and then fill Caleb's pipe, and sit at his knee and chatter to him of all they had been doing; then she had to visit Molly in her nice clean kitchen, and play with Sukey and her kittens. How she longed for a kitten in the old garret in Granite Lodge, only Queenie shook her head at the bare idea.

To-night Molly was ironing her master's shirts, and Emmie's visit was paid earlier than usual, that she might help her by washing up the tea-things, a piece of play-work that was charming to the little girl.

As soon as she had left them, Caleb put down his pipe, and drew his chair closer to Queenie, and laid his wrinkled hand on hers.

“ Well, my dear, well ! and how has the world been treating you lately ? ” for the quiet, thoughtful face he had been watching all the evening seemed to him to have grown sadder since he last saw it.

“ You must not ask me, my dear old friend,” returned the girl, sorrowfully ; “ I have been losing heart lately.”

“ Nay, nay, that’s bad hearing.”

“ One must speak the truth. I have lost not only heart, but courage. If it were not for Emmie I could battle on ; I am strong and tough enough for anything, but she makes me weak.”

“ Nay, surely.”

“ Do not misunderstand me,”—as the kind old hand stroked hers gently,—“ I could not bear you to do that. I am weak, I do not complain, I am young and healthy, and a little hardness will not hurt me ; but it is for Emmie I fear. Caleb,” in an almost inaudible voice, “ what they make me suffer through her ! ”

"I know it, I know it," rubbing up his grey hair restlessly.

"She is getting thinner every day, and losing appetite, and there is a nervous look in her eyes that I do not like. Miss Titheridge will not see it; I think sometimes she dislikes Emmie; she and Fraulein are harder on her than ever."

"There now, there now, poor lambs, poor orphaned lambs," broke in the compassionate Caleb.

"They are driving me to the verge of destruction, and they know it," continued Queenie, in the same strange, suppressed voice; "things cannot go on like this much longer. Caleb, I shall frighten you, but I have made up my mind to do something desperate, and to do it at once: I mean to go to Mr. Calcott."

Caleb's hands dropped on his knees, and his eyes grew round and fixed. "Miss Queenie!" he gasped at length.

"I shall go to him," repeated the young girl quietly, "and tell him about Emmie."

"But—but he will never see you, my dear young lady; you must be mad or dreaming. See

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Mr. Calcott ! it is a preposterous idea--preposterous--pre--."

" Hush ! when have you ever known me fail in anything I have undertaken ? It is a waste of words to try and dissuade me. All last night I lay thinking it out, till my brain reeled. I may do no good ; heaven knows what manner of man I have to deal with, but all the same I will speak to him, face to face, and tell him what is in my heart."

" Heaven preserve the young creature, for she is certainly daft !" groaned Caleb ; and here he positively wrung his hands. " The lamb in the lion's den, that is what it will be. Miss Queenie, dear," he said, coaxingly, " I am thirty or forty years older than you ; be guided by an old friend, and put this thought out of your head."

Queenie shook her head.

" It will do no good to Emmie, and only anger him against you both. He is an old man now, and ailing ; and some say he suffers a good deal at times, and then he gets almost beside himself. You do not know to what you expose yourself."

" Besides," finding the girl still remained silent,

"you may even turn him more against you. Sometimes I have seen him start and bite his lip when the school has passed our office window ; he never fails to recognise it, and he seems disturbed and put out for minutes afterward. You see his sin lies heavy on him—the sin of those wicked words, Miss Queenie."

"Yes, yes, I know," she interrupted hastily, "and most likely he repents. Caleb, it is useless ; nothing you can say will shake my resolution. Things have come to this pass, that I would rather beg my bread than be indebted any longer to Miss Titheridge. If we stay there Emmie will die, and then what good will my life be to me."

The old man shook his head reproachfully. "Miss Queenie, you know what you have refused ?"

"Yes," she returned, looking at him with a smile that made her face absolutely beautiful, "yes, dear old friend ; but it was right. You were too old to work for us, too old to be burthened with two such helpless creatures ; and then how were we to know whether Mr. Calcott's

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anger might not have been turned on you. Were we to bring trouble on our only friend?"

"I said," continued Caleb in a broken voice, "that as long as I had a crust of bread and a cup of water, and a roof, however humble, I would share them with you and Emmie."

"And my answer," continued the girl softly, as she lifted the wrinkled hand to her lips, "my answer was that Emmie and I loved you too well to bring sorrow and ruin on you. Caleb, Emmie is dearer to me than anything in the world; but I would rather lose her than do such a thing."

"Ah, you were always so proud and self-willed," ejaculated Caleb, sorrowfully.

"Then I am proud of my pride; I rejoice in a self-will that prevents me from harming so deeply one whom I love. You have given us more than crusts, you have shared with us a nobler shelter than your roof, for you have warmed us through and through with a kindness that has known no stint or limit; and Emmie and I will bless you for it all our lives."

"Don't, don't, Miss Queenie; I cannot bear you to say such things."

"But I will say them, I must say them, when you call me proud and self-willed; I must defend myself, and get the last word; I am only a woman, you know."

"God bless such women, I say."

"You have the spirit of a little child, Caleb; so doubtless you will be heard. Blessings are long in coming to us I think, and I am growing hard and discontented in consequence; but you and Cathy have often saved me from hopeless infidelity."

"Good heavens! what do you mean?"

"Yes, from infidelity—that utter and hopeless disbelief in one's fellow-creatures. When I find myself growing cynical, I just say, 'There are Caleb and Cathy, the world cannot be wholly bad with two such good creatures in it,' and that thought rests me."

"Aye, aye, it is too old a head on young shoulders; people don't often think and say such things. You are rarely clever for your age, Miss Queenie."

"One can think without being clever," returned the girl, with a slight smile. "Cathy and I have strange talks sometimes; we often bewilder and lose ourselves. I have no one as Cathy has to set me right. It must be very nice to have a brother."

"Aye, I had a brother once," returned Caleb, dreamily; "he was deformed, poor fellow, a hunch-back; but every one liked Joe. I was only a little chap when he died, but I have never forgotten him yet; some of his sharp sayings come into my mind when I sit here smoking my pipe."

"A strong, wise, elder brother,—some one to trust,—and who would care for me," continued Queenie, reflectively. "I think Cathy must be a happy girl. Hark! that is nine striking; I must go and find Emmie."

"I have ironed lots of handkerchiefs, all the beautiful blue and white spotted ones," cried Emmie, rushing in, red and glowing, "and Molly has been telling me such lovely stories. I think Molly quite the handsomest woman I have ever seen after Queenie, she is so nice and rosy."

"Come, Em, come," replied the elder sister, quietly ; "it is raining so fast, dear, and the wind will blow you away unless you keep close to me. Bid Caleb good-night, and let us go."

"How dark and wet it is," cried poor Emmie, as the door of her child's paradise closed behind her, and the grey frowning portico of Granite Lodge loomed on her distant vision. "Oh, Queenie, why must we not go and live with Caleb, and leave this horrid, hateful prison of ours ?"

"Hush, pet ; shall I tell you a story ? but perhaps you cannot hear my voice in the wind. What ! tired, darling, already ? Suppose I carry you again just for fun ! It is dark, and no one will see us."

"Yes, just for fun," returned the child wearily ; "if you are not tired, Queenie. Mind you put me down when you are tired."

"Of course ; you are so dreadfully heavy ;" but the little joke died away into something like a sob as she lifted the thin, weak figure in her strong young arms, and struggled bravely through the storm.

## CHAPTER VI.

“ YOU ARE EMMIE’S UNCLE ! ”

“ So speaking, with less anger in my voice  
Than sorrow, I rose quickly to depart.”—*Curwen Leigh.*

QUEENIE MARRIOTT was right in asserting that she never failed to undertake anything to which she had really made up her mind. Strong impulses were rare with her; but now and then they gained the mastery, and over-bore all dread of opposing obstacles. At such times the forces of her mind lay dormant; argument could not shake; persuasion, even conviction, availed nothing. In such moods Queenie was inexorable, and triumphed in the exercise of her self-will.

“ I have nothing to lose in this matter, and all to gain,” she had said to Cathy. On the afternoon of the next half-holiday she had arrayed herself, with the stoicism of a young Spartan, and, with

the help of feminine art and cunning arrangement, had even given a certain style to her shabby garments.

"No one could take you for anything but a lady," Cathy said, as she watched her, half curiously and half enviously; "when people look at you they will not notice what you wear I mean. I wish I knew where you learnt deportment, my dear Madam Dignity. There," as Queenie buttoned her old gloves with a resolute air, "I cannot even lend you my pretty new ones, they would be ever so much too large."

"Never mind," returned Queenie with a smile; "my plumes are homely, certainly, but they are not borrowed. Take care of Emmie for me, and wish me good luck, for I am continually leading the forlorn hope."

Queenie had preserved a gallant demeanor in Granite Lodge, but she slackened her footsteps and drew her breath a little unevenly when she came in sight of Mr. Calcott's house, a large grey stone building with dark outside shutters, and a high portico over the gate resembling the entrance to a tomb. Queenie thought of the thin austere-

looking man who eyed their ranks so gloomily with a sudden failure of courage and an ominous beating in the regions of the heart ; but the bell was already ringing in strange hollow fashion, and the next moment she was confronted by a grey-haired butler.

“ Does Mr. Calcott live here ? could I see him for a moment on business ? ” It must be averred that Queenie’s voice was somewhat faint at this juncture ; the sombre hall, the morose face of the man, a little daunted her.

“ People on business always call at the office down the town. Mr. Calcott is not very well, but Mr. Smiler or Mr. Runciman could see you,” returned the man civilly enough, but with an evident desire to close the door in her appealing face.

“ It is not exactly business, but my errand is very pressing. If he is not very ill I must see him,” pleaded Queenie with a desperation evoked by emergency.

“ My master does not see visitors when he is suffering from gout,” persisted the man, with a pointed stress on the word visitors. “ I will take

your card if you like, but I fear it will be little use."

"I have no card," faltered Queenie ; "I do not want to send my name, though he knows it well. Please tell him a young lady wishes to speak to him on a matter of great importance ; tell him how grateful I shall be if he will grant me a five minutes' interview."

The man hesitated ; but Queenie's face and voice evidently pre-possessed him in her favour ; for after another glance he closed the door and ushered her into a small waiting-room leading out of the hall, with a cold, fireless grate, and a horse-hair sofa and chairs placed stiffly against the wall. There was a picture of Strafford led out to execution over the mantel-piece, which somehow attracted Queenie oddly. "Even the anticipation must be worse than the reality," she thought ; "one is a coward before-hand. Never-mind if I can only find words to tell him the truth when the time comes. I am not the first who has to suffer for trying to do the right thing."

Queenie was cheering herself up in sturdy

fashion, but she turned a little pale, nevertheless, when the servant re-entered and bade her follow him. “The execution will soon be over,” she said to herself, as she rose; “only in my case perhaps the pain will not cease.”

They had passed through the large square hall, dimly lighted from above, and had turned down a side-passage shut in with red baize doors; through one of these was an inner one, which the servant threw open, and Queenie found herself in a small room, furnished as a library, with a bright fire burning in a steel grate, and a cushioned chair beside it with a foot-rest, wherein sat a tall, thin old man, whom she at once recognized as Mr. Calcott. There was an instant’s silence as she bowed and threw back her veil, during which he eyed her morosely, and pointed to his foot swathed in bandages.

“I cannot rise, you see,” he said, in a harsh voice that somewhat grated on her ear, “neither can I keep a lady standing; please to be seated, while you tell me to what I am indebted for the pleasure of this interview; my servant says you declined to give him your name.”

"I had reasons for doing so. I feared you might not see me," returned Queenie, summoning all her resolution now the opportunity was gained. The hard mouth, the narrow, receding forehead, and the cold, gray eyes of the man before her stifled every dawning hope. Would those eyes soften? could those lines ever relax? He was an old man, older than she had thought, and there were traces of acute physical suffering in his face, but the hard tension of the muscles were terrible.

"Would you have seen me," she continued, steadily, "if I had said my name was Marriott?"

"So you are Frank Marriott's daughter," without the faintest token of surprise. "I must own I suspected as much from Gurnel's description; but I am slightly at a loss to discover what business Frank Marriott's daughter can possibly have with me."

"I have come on no business of my own," returned the girl, proudly. "I ask nothing from the world but the price of my own earnings. I would sooner starve"—with a sudden flush of irrepressible emotion—"than ask a favor from

a stranger, even though he were the brother of my own dear stepmother. It is for Emmie's sake I have come to you, Mr. Calcott ; Emmie, your own niece, your own flesh and blood, your sister's child.”

“ I have always expected this,” muttered Mr. Calcott, as he refreshed himself with a pinch of highly-scented snuff ; but a closer observer of human nature than Queenie would have detected a slight trembling in the white wrinkled hand.

“ When my dear stepmother, your sister, died,” continued Queenie, speaking more calmly now, “ she called me to her bed-side, and prayed me, for love of her, to watch over Emmie. I have kept my promise, and have done so ; but I am only young, not much more than twenty, and I have no one to help me, no one but Mr. Runciman, who is so good to us, to give me advice and counsel ; and now I feel that I cannot do my duty to Emmie.”

“ Your conduct has been estimable, no doubt ; but you must permit me to observe, my dear young lady, that I have not invited this confid- ence ; on the contrary, it is distasteful to me.

But doubtless you are only acting on Mr. Runciman's advice?"

"No, indeed," interposed the girl eagerly; "he tried to dissuade me from coming to you; he seemed frightened when I proposed it; it is my own thought; I am acting on my own responsibility. I said to myself, 'If he only knows what Emmie suffers, how often she is cold and hungry, and sad, he will do something to make her poor life happier.'"

"My good young woman, no melodrama, if you please. I have all my life confined myself strictly to facts. Miss Titheridge's establishment for young ladies is the most respectable in Carlisle. I have heard much from my clients in her praise; no one has ever before informed me that her pupils are cold or half-starved—facts, if you please, facts."

"I am speaking sober truth," returned Queenie, coloring. "I am one of Miss Titheridge's governesses, and, as far as I can tell, her pupils have no cause for complaint; it is only Emmie."

Mr. Calcott shook his head incredulously, and

took another pinch of snuff, this time somewhat irritably.

“ I work for my own and Emmie’s board,” she went on, “ and we pay a few pounds besides—all that we can spare. I do not complain for myself that the accommodation is bad and the food insufficient, though it is so for a growing child; but the food is such that Emmie cannot eat it, and often and often I have seen her cry from sheer cold and misery.”

“ Tut, some children will be fretful—aye, and dainty too.”

“ Emmie is bred up in too hard a school for daintiness; she is wasting and pining for want of proper nourishment and care and kindness. They are killing her by inches,” continued Queenie, losing self-restraint and clasping her hands together. “ When she cannot learn they shut her up in a desolate garret at the top of the house, where she gets frightened and has gloomy fancies; they will not listen to me when I tell them she is weak and ill. She is getting so thin that I can carry her, and yet they will not see it.”

"Humph! all this is very pleasant. Young lady, you are determined to have your say, and I have let you say it; now you must listen to me. You are trying to plead the cause of Emily Calcott, my niece, to interest me in her favor. What if I tell you," continued Mr. Calcott, raising his voice a little till it sounded harder and more metallic—"what if I tell you that I have no niece?"

"It would not be the truth, Mr. Calcott."

"What if I tell you that I have renounced the relationship," reiterated the old man, frowning at the interruption; "what if I once had a sister Emily, but that from the time of her marriage she became nothing to me! She left me," he went on, lashing himself into white passion by the remembrance of his wrongs, "when she knew I was a lonely, suffering man,—suffering mentally, suffering physically,—aye, when she knew too that she was the only thing spared to me out of the wreck of my life, that I cared for nothing in the world but her."

"Could you not forgive her for loving my father?" interposed Queenie softly.

"Pshaw! she had no love for him. She was

fooled by a soft tongue and handsome face ; she was to choose between us,—the invalid sorely-tried brother, who had cared for her all her life, and Frank Marriott,—and she chose him.”

“ She did, and became our dearest blessing.”

“ Aye, he valued his blessing,” with a sneer ; “ he did not drag her down, and wear out her youth for her, eh ? What does it matter what he did ? From that day she was no sister of mine ; I did not welcome her when she came to me, or feel grieved when she left.”

“ Alas ! we knew that too well when she came back to us looking so sad and weary.”

“ She told Frank Marriott that I repulsed and treated her cruelly, eh ?”

“ No, she never told him that ; she bore her troubles silently, and brooded over them ; but,” in a low voice, “ it helped to kill her.”

The veins on Mr. Calcott’s forehead swelled visibly, and his eyes became bloodshot.

“ What, girl ! you come into my house uninvited and accuse me of being my sister’s murderer ! Do you know I can have you up for libel and falsehood ?”

"I never told a falsehood in my life," returned Queenie simply; and somehow the young quiet voice seemed to soothe the old man's fury. "Poor mamma was unhappy, and grew weaker and weaker; and so when the fever came she had no strength to throw it off. The doctors never expected her to die, but I did always. Once in the middle of the night I heard her say, 'I ought never to have left Andrew—poor Andrew;' but I did not understand it then."

"Aye, she repented! I knew she would. Listen to me, girl, and then you will know you have come to me on a fruitless errand. Time after time she used to come crying to me, and asking me to lend her husband money. I loathed the fellow, and she knew it; and one day, when she had angered me terribly, I took a dreadful oath, that neither Frank Marriott or any child of hers should ever have a penny of my money—and Caleb heard me."

"I knew all this, Mr. Calcott."

"You knew this, and yet you came to me. Do you expect me to perjure myself for the sake of my precious niece?"

“ I think such perjury would bring a blessing on your head.”

“ You think so, eh ? ” regarding her with astonishment and perplexity. Strange to say, her independent answers and fearless bearing did not displease him ; on the contrary, they seemed to allay his wrath. The white eyebrows twitched involuntarily as he watched her from under them. In spite of himself and his anger, he felt an inexplicable yearning towards this girl, who sat there in her shabby clothes and looked at him with such clear, honest eyes. Somehow the young presence seemed to lighten the desolate room, so long untrodden by any woman's foot. “ If she were any one but Frank Marriott's daughter—” but here the softer mood evaporated. “ Tut ! what should you know of such things ? There, you have said your lesson, and said it well. Go home, girl ; go home.”

“ Shall I go back to your niece, sir, and say to her that one of her own flesh and blood has deserted her ? ”

“ I have no niece, I tell you ; I will not have a hated relationship forced upon me.”

"Your name is Andrew Calcott, and therefore you are Emmie's uncle. Take care, for heaven's sake; you cannot get rid of your responsibility in this way. If Emmie dies her death will lie at your door."

"I am sorry to ask a lady to withdraw, but I will hear no more."

"One moment, and I will take your hint," returned Queenie, rising and turning very pale. "You are merciless, Mr. Calcott, but you shall not find me troublesome after this, though we were perishing of hunger, though Emmie were dying in my arms. I will not crave your bounty. You have received me coldly," she continued with emotion, "you have given me hard, sneering words, but I do not resent them; you are refusing to help me in my bitter strait; you are leaving me young and single-handed to fight in this cruel, cruel world; you have disowned your own niece, and are sending me back to her almost broken-hearted, but I will not reproach you; nay, if it would not make you angry, I could almost say, I am sorry for you."

“ Sorry for me ! Is the girl mad ? ” but again the white eyebrows twitched uneasily.

“ I am sorry for you,” repeated Queenie, in her clear young voice, “ because you are old and lonely ; because you have only hard, miserable thoughts to keep you company ; because when you are ill no one will comfort you, when you die no one will shed tears over your grave. It must be so dreadful,” continued the girl, “ not to want love, to be able to do without it. Don’t be angry, Mr. Calcott, I am sorry for you ; I am indeed.”

Not only the eyelids, but the rigid lines of the mouth twitched convulsively, but his only answer was to point to the door ; but, as though irresistibly and painfully attracted by this spectacle of loveless old age, Queenie still lingered.

“ Emmie never forgets you, sir. She does not love you ; how can she ? but she still says the prayer mamma taught her—‘ God bless poor Uncle Andrew.’ Now I have seen you I shall ask her never to forget it.”

“ Leave me,” was all his answer ; and this time Queenie obeyed him. Had she remained she would have been frightened by the change

that came over him. The veins of the forehead were swollen and purple now, the twitching of the mouth increased, a strange numbness seemed creeping over him. That night Mr. Calcott was alarmingly ill.

## CHAPTER VII.

## LOCKED IN.

“ The path my father’s foot  
Had trod me out (which suddenly broke off  
And passed) alone I carried on, and set  
My child-heart ’gainst the thorny underwood  
To reach the grassy shelter of the trees.  
Ah, babe i’ the wood, without a brother babe !  
My own self pity, like the red-breast bird,  
Flies back to cover all that past with leaves.”

*Aurora Leigh.*

As the door of the inhospitable mansion closed behind Queenie she was conscious of a strange feeling of revulsion and weakness, a blank, hopeless depression of mind and body. At the first touch of the keen wintry air she shivered and staggered slightly.

“ All this has been too much for me ; I wonder if I am ill,” she said to herself in a vague, wondering way ; and then she remembered that she had

eaten nothing since the early morning. Suspense and anxiety had deprived her of appetite, and she had sent away her dinner untasted. "Whatever happens I must keep strong, for Emmie's sake," she thought, and she went into a baker's shop and bought two buns; but as she broke one she remembered that Emmie's sickly appetite had turned that day from the untempting viands placed before her.

"Emmy will eat these, she is so fond of buns," she thought, and she asked for a glass of water, which the woman gave civilly enough, telling her that she looked faint, and ought to rest for a little while; but Queenie thanked her and shook her head.

For a little while she walked on aimlessly; she felt stunned and broken, and felt that she dared not face Emmie until she had recovered herself. She was too weak to walk far, but where could she go? she could not face Caleb's eager questioning, she thought, and yet his house was her only haven. Service at the cathedral had long been over, the minor canon and some of the choir boys had brushed past her in the High-

street, laughing and talking merrily ; if she could only go and sit there for a little, until she felt stronger. Then she remembered, in a dazed sort of way, that she had heard that the workmen were doing some repairs in the nave, and were working late ; it might be worth her while to find out if they had left one of the doors open. She felt a momentary sensation of pleasure at discovering this was the case. One or two of the men were still there, and the organist was practising some Christmas anthems. Queenie crept into one of the canon's carved stalls and listened. A light gleamed from the organ, but the altar and choir were in deep shadow. The men were laughing over their work ; a beautiful tenor voice broke out with Gounod's 'Bethlehem,' the organ pealed and reverberated through the dim aisles.

Christmas time, "peace and good will on earth the angels' song," sounding through all time. Alas ! what peace in the sore, rancorous heart of the old man she had just left ! Ought she not to feel pity for one whom the good angel of mercy had forsaken ?

"The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."

Where had she heard those words? In church of course. Was Mr. Calcott wicked, or was he simply a soured, vindictive man, who considered himself ill-used by the world?

Her step-mother had loved him and had left him, and then had yearned after him with a bitterness of yearning that had shortened her life. Why had she accused herself, on her death-bed, of selfishness in leaving him? She had hinted indeed more than once of some great trouble that had warped his nature in early manhood; and yet what brother had a right to demand the sacrifice of a sister's whole life? Her step-mother had no morbid views of duty, but she had chidden herself for so leaving him.

There must be some mystery of which even Caleb was ignorant. Caleb and his fellow-clerks spoke shudderingly of the fits of ungovernable rage to which Mr. Calcott was subject at times; and Queenie knew that for many years he had led the life of a recluse. People spoke of him as an eccentric person, a misanthrope, in fact; but he was not generally disliked, though his clerks and servants feared him. He gave largely in charities,

and was always first in the subscription list in the town, and spoke much at vestries. The firm of Calcott and Calcott had always been respected in Carlisle, but of late he had withdrawn almost wholly from public life, and people said his health was failing. Queenie pondered over this problem till her head ached, and the organ changed melody and broke out into a sweet minor key ; then a magnificent solemn prelude, sounding the keynote of every possible pain, an infinite march of woe tracing the footsteps of a Divine majestic life, and wrapping wonderful meanings and solemn hints in every chord—and Queenie knew she was listening to Handel's unrivalled overture to the ' Messiah.'

The sadder music pleased her better and made the tears flow, a luxury not often indulged by the overtasked governess. After all, would she change places with the miserable man she had left? Her trials were great no doubt, but she had youth and health and energy, and Emmie and Cathy loved her. By-and-by, when this dreadful winter was over and spring came, they would go down to Cathy's home, and Emmie would be

a happy child for some weeks at least; they must live in hopes of that. After all there must be a meaning in the pain they had to bear; and then Queenie thought of a strange picture she had seen as a child, painted by a poor crazy artist living in their neighbourhood, at least her father had said he was crazy, though she and her step-mother had thought otherwise. It was called "The March of Suffering," and it was explained to Queenie that it was an allegorical picture of life. Her father had pished and pooh-poohed it as a dismal caricature, but her step-mother had shed tears over it, she remembered; one of the figures had attracted them both—a young girl with a sweet, resolute face, carrying a spiked cross in her bleeding hand, an old man before her had fallen down, and lay with his grey hair grovelling in the dust, and, still holding the torturing cross firmly with one hand, she had stooped to raise him.

The face and figure lingered in Queenie's childish memory, and recurred to her mind as the solemn notes of the 'Messiah' reverberated through the cathedral. "My cross has spikes

too," she thought ; and then the workmen went out noisily shouldering their tools, and the young man with the tenor voice came clanking through the choir, and stared at poor pale Queenie as though she were a ghost, and the organ died away with a long plaintive wail.

Queenie followed them reluctantly ; the buns were still in her pocket, but she had forgotten her faintness. As she stepped out into the dark narrow close she could see the windows of the Dean's house brightly illuminated, a few stars shone in the December sky, a cutting wind lurked round every corner, a faint vaporous moon shone over the cathedral.

It was too cold to linger ; even the dark, cheerless school-room, with its cindery fire and insufficient light, would be better than the streets of Carlisle on such a night. Emmie would be wondering, too, what had become of her, and be picturing her all this time seated in Caleb's easy parlor : at this thought she drew her thin cloak closer round her and hurried on.

When she reached Granite Lodge she rang for

some time without gaining admittance ; this surprised her.

"It is very cold standing out here so long, Mary," she said quietly, as the girl opened the door at last, and looked at her with a scared face.

"I am so glad you have come, Miss," she returned; "Miss Clayton is in such a way, and all the young ladies. Fraulein has been going on awful, and mistress and Miss Tozer are out."

"Emmie!" was Queenie's only thought as she hurried on to the school-room, but a flying foot-step on the stairs arrested her, and Cathy rushed down to her looking pale and terrified.

"Oh, Queenie, where have you been ? I expected you home hours ago ; Fraulein has been going on in the most scandalous way, and Miss Titheridge is out, and I am so frightened about Emmie."

"Where is she ? what do you mean ?" asked poor Queenie, her knees suddenly knocking together with weakness, and her lips becoming dry all at once.

"Emmie had not been doing anything, only

she was stupid and could not learn her lessons, you know her way, and Fraulein got into an awful rage, worse than I have ever seen her, and boxed Emmie's ears, so that the poor child was quite giddy; and when I spoke up and called her a cruel thing she sent Emmie up to her room, and locked her in, and put the key in her pocket; and though I have been going on at her like mad she will not give it up."

"Locked her up in the dark!" almost screamed Queenie. Her own voice sounded quite awful to her ; she was half way up the stairs by this time, with Cathy panting behind her.

"What could we do, Queenie? don't look like that. I have been sitting on the floor outside the door for hours, till I was almost starved with cold, talking to her."

"She talked then!" pausing a moment on the garret stairs.

"Well, she cried a good deal, and I talked, but she has not answered lately," stammered Cathy ; "perhaps she is asleep, she complained of feeling giddy and confused ;" but Cathy, whose eyes were red with crying, did not add how passion-

ately the child had beaten against the door and implored to be let out. "She was so afraid of the darkness, and she wanted to hold some one's hand." Neither did she add that just before Queenie's ring she had been frightened by a stifled groan, and then a sound as though something heavy had fallen; but her hesitation and evident terror were enough for Queenie, and in another moment she was kneeling outside the door:

"Emmie dear! Emmie, my darling! it is I—Queenie; there is nothing to fear—nothing; speak to me just one word, darling, to say you are not so very frightened, and then I will go down and get the key from Fraulein. Emmie, Emmie! do you hear?" shaking the door; but there was no answer.

"Stay there, Cathy," whispered Queenie in a hoarse voice; "I am going to Fraulein." Her face was white with apprehension, but the look in her eyes scared Cathy.

The girls were huddled together and whispering in knots of twos and threes as she entered the school-room. There was evidently a mutiny, for

Fraulein, with heated face and harsh voice, was vainly calling to order. A murmur of "shame! we will tell Miss Titheridge," came to Queenie's ears, but she heeded nothing as she walked up to the table with out-stretched hand.

"Give me that key, Fraulein!"

The woman looked at her with an expression at once stolid and immovable; the heavy Teutonic face was unusually lowering. Queenie had more than once suspected that Fraulein was addicted to a somewhat free use of stimulant; now as she looked at the inflamed, stupid face she was sure of it.

"Meess shall not dictate to me, I am mistress of this school-room to-night; the leetle Meess was naughty, unbearable; she must be punished."

"Give me that key at once, or I will break open the door; give me that key, or you will rue it all your life," continued Queenie, sternly. The woman quailed for a moment under that bright indignant glance, and then she looked up with an expression of triumphant cunning.

"Do not fatigue yourself, Meess, the key is safe in my pocket; there it will remain until my

dear friend, Meess Titheridge, returns ; ach nein  
Meess shall not have it."

For a single instant Queenie measured the strong, powerful frame of the woman before her, then she turned from her without a word. "Clarice Williams, Agatha Sinclair, stand by me and be witnesses that I am forced by sheer necessity to do this thing ;" and with that she quitted the room.

Many of the girls would have followed, but Fraulein ordered them to their seats so savagely that they dared not rebel. As she went up the stairs the door-bell again sounded. Cathy rose with a look of relief on seeing her friend. "Have you got the key, Queenie ?"

"No," returned Queenie, doggedly. "Stand back, Cathy ; I am going to break open the door."

Either the young muscles were braced with new strength, or else the fastening of the door was crazy with age, but as Queenie threw herself against it with all her force the wood-work round the lock splintered, and in another moment the door yielded.

"Now, Cathy, the light! Ah, merciful heavens! the savages!" as she threw herself down on the floor beside the white, senseless figure of the child and gathered it into her arms.

"She is not dead--she has only fainted, Queenie! Oh, Queenie, don't look like that!" cried poor Cathy, sobbing as though her heart would break over the pitiful spectacle. The elder sister's face was as white as the child's, her eyes were burning and dilated.

"If she is dead, Fraulein is her murderer. Out of the way, Cathy. They have gone too far; they shall hear me now; don't stop me--nothing on earth shall stop me from speaking!"

"Queenie, Queenie, come back; are you mad?" but Cathy might as well have spoken to the wind; she could do nothing but follow, protesting at every step. As they crossed the hall they could hear Miss Titheridge's voice raised somewhat sharply in the school-room; she had returned, then. Queenie made no comment; she simply walked in and laid her unconscious burthen at the governess's feet.

"Miss Marriott, good heavens! what does this

mean?" and Miss Titheridge recoiled in absolute dismay.

"It means that Emmie is dead, and that Fraulein is her murderer!" returned Queenie in an awful voice. The poor thing really believed it for a moment.

"No, no," sobbed Cathy, sitting down on the floor and drawing the heavy head on to her lap; "she is not dead, she is living, breathing; some of you help me to revive her; it is cold and fright and hunger that has made her faint. Oh, Miss Titheridge, don't mind poor Queenie, she is almost beside herself."

"If she is not dead she is dying," persisted the girl in a hoarse voice. "No, don't touch her; don't dare to touch her!" as Miss Titheridge, with a sudden feeling of remorse, bent over the unconscious child and lifted the little cold hand. "It is in your house this deed is done; ask Fraulein, who has shut her up in the dark for hours, pinching with cold and hunger, and in spite of all her cries to be released; ask Cathy; ask Clarice; ask any of them."

"Fraulein, is this true?" and Miss Titheridge

looked absolutely shocked. She had treated the poor orphan with hardness and severity, but she was not a bad woman. A sudden revulsion of feeling came over her as she looked at the prostrate figure in Cathy's lap; "Fraulein, is it true that you could have acted so barbarously?"

"It is true; and it is not the first time," returned Queenie. "If she dies, Miss Titheridge, her death will lie at your door as well as Fraulein's; if she die, look to yourselves, for I will have justice, if there is justice in England. All Carlisle shall know how you have treated the child committed to your care. As to that woman," pointing with her finger to Fraulein, who now looked on in stupid terror at this scene, "she will live to rue this day if Emmie dies."

"Hush, hush, my dear Miss Marriott; be calm and reasonable, I entreat you." Miss Titheridge had turned very pale, she was quite cowed by the girl's fierce despair. There was a wild, strange light in Queenie's eyes as she faced them, as she hurled words of righteous wrath at the shrinking women. "My dear Miss Marriott, I am more grieved than I can say. I will do

what you like. Send for a doctor ; do what you please ; only be calm."

"Calm !" repeated Queenie, in a voice of such utter heartbreak that tears positively came to Miss Titheridge's hard eyes.

"Yes ; send for a doctor ; do something all of you," implored Cathy ; but as one or two of the girls stepped up timidly with proffers of assistance Queenie waved them fiercely away.

"No ; you none of you loved her ; you shall not touch her. Give her to me. Come with me, Cathy ;" and as Cathy obeyed her wondering, Queenie led the way to Cathy's room, and laid her on Cathy's bed.

"Shut them all out ; I will have no one but you," she had said to her friend. When the doctor arrived he found the two girls trying vainly to restore animation to the child.

He shook his head very gravely when Cathy told him all, for Queenie never spoke again during that dreadful night. "This is a sad case," he said at last, after a careful examination. "When she wakes up I fear she will not know you ; brain fever is the least we can expect from

such a shock. Acute terror on an exhausted system often leads to very sad results, especially with nervous children." But though he spoke in a low tone, Queenie heard him.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## DARK DAYS.

“ Cometh sunshine after rain ;  
After mourning joy again ;  
After heavy, bitter grief  
Dawneth surely sweet relief !  
And my soul, who from her height  
Sunk to realms of woe and night,  
Wingeth now to heaven her flight.”

*Lyra Germanica.*

EMMIE did not die, neither were her physician's worst fears verified ; but for many a long week the frail existence hovered between life and death.

When the lethargy had passed a long season of delirium intervened, and every symptom of severe brain fever manifested itself. For weeks the little sufferer failed to recognize the loving faces that bent over her. Caleb Runciman spent most of his leisure hours beside the bedside,

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holding the hand of his little favorite, and gazing sorrowfully at the thin flushed face tossing so restlessly on the pillow.

Sometimes Molly, with her pleasant features and brisk homely ways, would come and watch through the long night, that Queenie might enjoy a few hours' repose. Caleb and his faithful Molly were the only visitors to the sick room. Miss Titheridge had pleaded once, almost with tears, to be allowed to take some part in the nursing, but Queenie had sternly refused. "Emmie shall see no one but those who love her," was the invariable reply.

Granite Lodge was deserted now; Cathy and the other girls had long ago gone home for the Christmas holidays. Cathy clung to her friends, crying bitterly, when the moment arrived for saying good-bye; but Queenie only looked at her with great weary eyes.

"I shall go home and tell Garth and Langley everything. They will be sure to ask you to come to us, after my London visit in May, to stay with us for a long, long time."

"If Emmie be ever strong enough," began I.

Queenie ; but somehow she could not finish her sentence. She suffered all Cathy's caresses passively, and then went back to her old place and laid her head on Emmie's pillow.

It seemed as though nothing could rouse her from the strange apathy that had crept over her after that terrible night. She heard almost without emotion that Fraulein had been dismissed ; only, as the luggage was brought downstairs, and she heard Miss Titheridge's voice speaking in a subdued key in the corridor outside, she quietly left her place and opened the door.

Fraulein Heimer was at the head of the staircase in her travelling dress ; she seemed petrified at the sight of Queenie. The girl walked up to her and laid her hand on her wrist. "Come here, Fraulein, I want you a moment," she said quietly ; and, strange to say, the woman obeyed her without a word, and followed her to the threshold of the sick-room ; but Queenie would not suffer her to enter. " You can see your work from here," she continued, in a suppressed voice. " Ah ! she is smiling at you ; she does not know you tried to be her murderer."

"You are cruel ; you will have your revenge, or you would not have brought me here, Meess." The woman's coarse, brutal nature was absolutely cowed by the spectacle of suffering innocence.

The child lay upon her pillow smiling idly, and waving her emaciated arms to and fro upon the coverlid ; the fair hair was closely shaven, the eyes dilated and brilliant.

"I have always longed for a cowslip ball ; ask that lady to make me one, mamma ; and strings and strings of daisy chains."

"Why did you bring me here, Meess ? I will not stay, I will not look ! Ach das arme Engel-ein ; ach guäddige Himmel." The woman was trembling and all but hysterical. Queenie's detaining hand dropped from her wrist ; her revenge was satisfied.

"I wish you to know how we suffered. Sometime, if Emmie gets well, I shall try to bring myself to forgive you ; but not till then. There go, she is calling to me ; she always calls me mamma."

It would not be too much to say that that sick room became Queenie's world ; she knew

literally nothing of what passed outside it. Cathy wrote long letters to her, but she seldom answered them. One day she enclosed a note from Langley.

"My dear Miss Marriott," it began, "Cathy's glowing description of her friend makes us long to know you; and my brother and I trust, that you and your dear little sister will be able to pay us a visit in the early summer. We know all your troubles, and wish that it were in our power to lighten them—" but here a restless movement from Emmie disturbed her, and she laid the letter aside.

Emmie's wanderings were rarely painful to the listener. A merciful oblivion had stamped out the memory of that terrible night; generally her talk was of the country. She imagined herself wandering in beautiful places with her mother and Queenie; gathering flowers, or else picking up shells and sea-weed on the shore. Now and then there would be a troubled break—the waves were threatening to engulf her—or a serpent, or strange-headed beast lurked among the flowers; at such times she would grow

restless, and it required all Queenie's efforts to tranquillize her, while the constant cry of "Mamma, mamma," was pitiful to hear from the lips of the motherless child.

"Mamma is here," Queenie would answer with loving falsehood, laying the burning face on her breast; and something of the intense mother-love, seemed really to pass into the girl's heart.

She was growing haggard and hollow-eyed under the strain of the long nursing. The doctor shook his head and remonstrated in vain, and Caleb's entreaties were equally unavailing. "You will be ill, Miss Queenie; every one says so. You are up every night unless Molly is here, and barely snatch an hour's sleep in the twenty-four; you are over-taxing your strength, and a breakdown will be the consequence."

"I shall not break down as long as Emmie wants me," returned the girl bravely, but her lip trembled as though with weakness; she was becoming conscious that all this was becoming a terrible effort, that her strength would not hold out for ever. A sudden noise jarred upon her now; and once or twice, when her kind old friend

was speaking to her, she had great trouble to refrain from bursting into tears.

Sometimes of an evening, when Caleb was there, she would wrap herself in a shawl, and walk up and down the stone hall and corridors to allay her restlessness; sometimes the door would open, and a red gleam shine out from Miss Titheridge's snug parlor, where she sat in cosy fireside circle with her friends. She looked up oddly and half-scared as Queenie's white face glimmered out of the darkness, but she never invited her to enter; the girl had repulsed her too surely for that.

The upstair corridor had a window at each end. Queenie was never weary of pacing this. Sometimes the moonlight flooded it, and she trod in a perfect pathway of light; once or twice she stood looking out on the snowy house-tops, shining under the eerie light of stars.

It seemed months since she had sat in the curious carved stall in the cathedral, since she had heard the Christmas anthems and Gounod's '*'Bethlehem'*'; months since she had stood beside

the old man's chair, pleading for his own flesh and blood.

Caleb had spoken to her once or twice of Mr. Calcott's strange and alarming seizure. He had kept his room ever since, and was considered in a somewhat critical state, he believed. Queenie heard him vaguely; but no suspicion as to the cause of his illness entered her mind.

The only thing that really roused her was when Emmie first feebly called her by her name. It was the night before the girls came back to school. Caleb had not yet paid his evening visit, and the sisters were alone.

"Is that you, Queenie?" Emmie had said. "I thought it was mamma," and Queenie had fallen on her knees, and murmured her thanksgiving with floods of grateful tears.

"I know Caleb too," she had said later on, when the old man came to her bedside; and something of the old quaint smile flitted over her face at the sight of her favorite. "Have I been ill, Caleb? Queenie has been crying dreadfully, and yet she says she is very happy."

"Yes, my precious lamb, you have been ill;

and Miss Queenie there has almost knocked herself up with nursing you ; but now you are going to get well and strong," laying down the little skeleton hand that could not raise itself. "Hush, my pretty ; hush, Miss Emmie, my dear," as a large tear stole down the thin face ; "you must not fret now you are getting better."

"I am so sorry for my Queen, my poor tired Queen," sobbed the child ; but she was soon hushed and comforted by assurances that Queenie was only a little tired and would soon get rested.

Emmie slept for hours after this ; and before many days were over a faint but steady progress was perceptible. Cathy indeed was shocked at her appearance, and wondered if anything so thin and unsubstantial could really be Emmie. Emmie smiled at her, but was too weak to speak more than a word or two.

One day, when she was well enough to be raised into a sitting posture and propped up with pillows, Caleb entered with a mysterious-looking basket, from whence proceeded a faint scratching sound ; and this being opened, a small

long-haired kitten, with a tiny perky face and bushy tail, crept mewing into Emmie's arms.

The child's delight and astonishment at the sight of the long-coveted treasure were almost overpowering, and she hugged the creature to her without speaking.

"Is it mine? is it really mine? will they let me keep it?" she gasped at length.

"It is my belief that they would let you keep a whole menagerie, if Miss Queenie there chose to say she wished it," returned Caleb with a sly glance at her; "some folks are properly frightened."

"Yes; Miss Titheridge will let you keep it," replied her sister quietly; "you need not be afraid; she is very kind now, Emmie."

"Oh yes, I know; when you are down at your lessons she often comes and sits with me; she brought me that funny little man full of sweet-meats yesterday. I went to give some of them to Cathy."

Queenie knew of these surreptitious visits, but she took no notice; it needed time to erase the memory of those years of neglect and cruelty.

Emmie's sweet nature knew no resentment ; but with Queenie it was different.

She saw that Miss Titheridge was afraid of her. "She has reason," thought Queenie ; "she has injured me deeply. If the time ever comes to get rid of us both, she will do so gladly ; but I do not mean to give her the chance ; I am determined to find work elsewhere."

As soon as Emmie could safely be left for an hour or two Queenie resumed her work in the school-room unasked ; now and then she stole upstairs for a peep at the invalid. She sometimes found Emmie asleep with the kitten in her arms, or surrounded by the pictures and flowers which the girls lavished on her. She would look up, and say cheerily as Queenie entered, "I am not a bit dull ; Cathy and Clarice have been up, and just now Miss Titheridge brought me some jelly, and kittie and I have had such games," and then Queenie would go down again with a lightened heart to her uncongenial task.

She often worked late into the night, that she might devote more time to Emmie. The child flagged and grew weary towards evening, and

then Queenie never left her. Long after all the inmates of Granite Lodge had fallen into a refreshing sleep the young governess would trim the shaded lamp, and pore patiently over the pile of copy-books waiting for correction. Even when her head was on the pillow she could not always rest. The future lay dark before her; she must find other work; but where? that was the question.

Emmie was gaining strength day by day; but for months, perhaps years, she would require the greatest care. The doctor's orders were stringent. She must not open a book for months; the brain would not bear the slightest pressure; she must lead a child's unthinking life—eat, drink, and play, and, above all, sleep.

Emmie took very kindly to this *régime*. She spent most of her time in sleep; during the remainder of her waking hours she would lie in languid content watching the antics of her kitten, or waiting for Queenie to come and talk to her.

Queenie made up her mind at last that she must speak to Miss Titheridge; and one evening

she entered the little room where the governess sat casting up her accounts for the last month.

She looked up a little amazed at the interruption ; but her manner changed when she saw Queenie, and became as usual slightly embarrassed.

“Do you want me, Miss Marriott ? is there anything wrong with Emmie ?”

“Nothing, thank you. I only wanted to speak to you about myself. I think it right that we should come to some sort of understanding about the future.”

“About the future ?”

“Yes, Miss Titheridge,”—Queenie was the more self-possessed of the two,—“it seems to me that we cannot go on like this much longer. Emmie’s illness has been a great expense and trouble ; and, as far as I see, she will not cease to be a trouble for a long time to come, and we have no right to burthen you.”

“It is certainly very unfortunate,” began the governess. “Dr. Prout is very kind about it ; but still, as you say, it is a sad inconvenience ; one of my best rooms too.”

“As long as Emmie remains she cannot go

back to her old one. Dr. Prout expressly forbids it ; he says any renewal of the terror might be fatal."

"Well, we must say no more about it then," turning over her papers nervously.

"Thank you. Believe me," continued Queenie earnestly, "I do thank you for your kindness, tardy though it be to Emmie. I am only sorry that I cannot feel more grateful for it ; but after what has happened there can be no question of gratitude between us."

"I am sorry you are of so unforgiving a disposition, Miss Marriott."

"I hope it is not that. I think it is that I have suffered too much to be able to forget ; but what I meant to say was this : Emmie's weak health is only likely to be an inconvenience, and we have no right to burthen a stranger. I have therefore reluctantly acceded to my old friend Mr. Runciman's request, to place Emmie with him, while I look out for fresh work. He has found me hard to persuade," continued the girl, smiling faintly as Caleb's arguments recurred to her; "but circumstances have somewhat changed,

and I do not fear now that this step will injure him."

"And when do you intend to leave me?" enquired Miss Titheridge in an injured voice, for Queenie was too valuable a governess to replace easily. In her heart, though, she was secretly relieved at the course things were taking; now she would not have the onus of dismissing the orphans from her roof.

"I shall be glad to remain until Easter," replied Queenie, quietly; and as Miss Titheridge only bowed her head and made no comment she withdrew.

"I have done the deed, Cathy," she said, coming into her friend's room, looking pale and exhausted; "and now it is off my mind. After Easter we shall be homeless."

"Nonsense!" interrupted Cathy, rapturously embracing her; "you will only be out of the dragon's clutches. You are coming to us for a long, long visit; and you shall not leave us until you have found another situation; and after that Emmie is going to that dear funny Mr. Runciman's."

" Only for a little while ; I shall not leave her long there. You see Mr. Calcott's illness has made a difference ; they say he will never be well, and so he will not find out that Caleb is going to have Emmie ; besides which, Caleb has promised to take the money I gave Miss Titheridge."

" So your pride is satisfied. I am glad of that, my dear Madam Dignity. Now let us go and sit with Emmie."

## CHAPTER IX.

## AN ERRAND OF MERCY.

“ Speak gently to the aged one ;  
Grieve not the careworn heart :  
The sands of life are nearly run,  
Let such in peace depart.”

*Christian Lyrics.*

CALEB RUNCIMAN had told Queenie that Mr. Calcott was seriously ill; but the girl had received the news with indifference, making no comments. “ What was his life—his useless, loveless life—in comparison with Emmie’s ? ” she thought with bitterness.

Presently, when her trouble had lightened a little, and Emmie was slowly advancing towards convalescence, she remembered her hardness with some compunction ; and her heart grew soft and pitiful over the thought of that lonely sick-room.

“ I wonder if Mr. Calcott remembers my

visit?" she said once to Caleb, but Caleb only shook his head in silence. He had not as yet been admitted to his employer's presence. The illness was enveloped in mystery, and all sorts of reports were current with respect to it.

Neither of them guessed the truth, or knew the strange thoughts and memories that haunted the sick man's pillow. The past was ever before him ; conscience, so long dormant, had roused at last, and had laid hold of him with fierce and angry grip; he saw himself the victim of a hypochondria so fell and senseless that it had warped and scathed his better nature.

His past life was mapped out before him : a youth of disease and suffering, soothed only by a sister's love ; a querulous, discontented manhood, darkened by fits of strange melancholy ; then years of loneliness and brooding.

Why had he failed with his life ? Other men had suffered as well as he; other men had experienced the same passionate sorrows, had reaped disappointment where they had expected happiness, had battled with chronic disease, and yet had borne themselves bravely before the world !

Why had he grown so hardened and exasperated against his kind that his very servants trembled in his presence ?

What words were those that rung in his ear till the very air seemed to vibrate with them : “ I am sorry for you, because you are old and lonely ; because you have only miserable thoughts to keep you company ; because when you are ill no one will comfort you, when you die no one will shed tears over your grave.”

Curses on that girl ! How dared she stand and pity him to his face ! him—Andrew Calcott—whom every one feared and respected—the man so outwardly prosperous that the world never guessed at the strange fiend that gnawed at his vitals !

“ It must be so dreadful not to want love, to be able to do without it ; ” and again, “ Emmie never forgets you, sir. She does not love you ; how can she ? but she still says the prayer mamma taught her—‘ God bless poor Uncle Andrew.’ ” Ah ! merciful heavens, would those words never leave him ?

By-and-bye the torment he suffered became

unbearable ; whole sentences of that conversation seemed stamped and burned upon the brain. He would say them aloud sometimes, to the terror of those who watched him, and thought his mind was wandering.

“ You are refusing to help me in my bitter strait ; you are leaving me, young and single-handed, to fight in this cruel, cruel world ; you have disowned your own niece, and are sending me back to her almost broken-hearted ; but I will not reproach you ; ” and then she had come closer to his chair, and had stood beside him, almost touching him with her hand.

He could see her clearly ; the whole scene seemed photographed in his memory. Was he dreaming, or was she there really beside his bed ?

He could recall every expression of her countenance, every trick of her speech. What a young creature she had looked in her shabby dress, sitting there before him. How eloquently she had spoken, and with what self-possession and dignity. Once or twice her voice had faltered, and the tears had gathered in her large brown

eyes, as she pleaded for Emmie, but she had brushed them away hastily, and had gone on speaking.

If he had ever had a daughter he would have liked her to have looked at him with those clear honest glances. The girl was absolutely without guile. Hard as he was, his heart had yearned over her, and yet he had driven her from his presence. Now and then a strange fancy, almost a longing, seized him, to hear her speak again, if it were only to tell him that she was sorry for him. He called himself a fool, and chid himself for his weakness; but, nevertheless, the longing was there and he knew it.

One evening, as Queenie was correcting some themes in the class-room, she was told Mr. Runciman wished to speak to her.

Caleb's visits were rare now, but he sometimes came to bring a few snowdrops or violets to his favorite. To-night he was later than usual, and Emmie was asleep.

"I am not come to see Emmie to-night; it is you I want, Miss Queenie. You might have knocked me down with a feather when he gave

me the message. But I suppose he is in his right mind ? ” continued Caleb, his blue eyes becoming very round and wide, and his rosy face a trifle paler than usual.

“ A message from whom ? ” enquired Queenie, with some degree of curiosity. She was pleased to see her old friend ; any break in the monotony of her day was welcome.

“ Ay, you’ll never guess. Why, my dear young lady, when he told me to come and fetch you I was that flabbergasted—if you know the meaning of such an outlandish word—that I could not tell whether I was standing on my head or my heels. ‘ I want you to fetch me Frank Marriott’s daughter,’ he says, in a queer off-hand way, and he shut his eyes and laid quite quiet.”

“ Do you mean Mr. Calcott has sent for me ? ” gasped Queenie for the moment. She looked quite frightened.

“ Ay, sure enough, though I never thought you would have guessed it so soon,” returned Caleb admiringly ; “ but women’s wits beat men’s hollow. Well, I couldn’t believe my ears, and

no wonder ; so I waited for him to open his eyes, and then I ventured to ask him to be so good as to repeat his speech, fearing I hadn't rightly understood him."

" ' You have understood me very well, Runciman,' he said in a quiet meaning sort of way, not quite pleased at my hesitation, you may be sure. It is ' do this, or go there, and be sharp about it,' with Mr. Calcott, always. ' Please lose no time over your errand, but bring Frank Marriott's daughter back with you ; I want to see if I can get to sleep to-night.' That's all, on my word and honor, Miss Queenie."

" It is very strange, but I suppose I must go ; perhaps he has repented his unkindness, and wants to tell me so. Wait a minute, Caleb, while I tell Miss Titheridge. Emmie is asleep, and so I shall not mind leaving for half-an-hour."

" It is a wet night, I warn you ; it is all of a piece with his usual selfishness sending for you on a night like this," fretted Caleb, who was much perplexed and exercised in his mind by the whole proceeding ; but Queenie met this additional trial with her usual cheerfulness,

and struggled along bravely under her old umbrella.

This time they were not kept waiting. Gurnel eyed them quite as morosely, but he ushered Caleb at once into a comfortable-looking dining-room with a blazing fire, and wine and biscuits on the table ; while he begged Queenie civilly to follow him, which she did, naïvely admiring the carved balustrades and soft rich carpets as she did so.

“ My master is up, but he cannot leave his room,” explained the servant, as he ushered Queenie into a large handsomely-furnished bedroom, where Mr. Calcott lay on a couch beside the fire, in his Indian dressing-gown, with an eider-down quilt over him. A respectable looking woman sat with needle-work at a little round table beside him. At Queenie’s entrance she curtsied and withdrew.

Queenie quietly took her place.

“ You have sent for me,” she said softly. “ I am sorry to hear you have been so ill. It is a wet night, but I could not help coming,” she continued, trying to speak naturally, but she

could not ; the change in the sick man appalled her. She understood, as she looked at him, that he was slowly but surely dying.

"They tell me I have some months still before me ; that's bad hearing for those who wait upon me, as I am likely to trouble them for some time," with a touch of his old grimness. "Well, girl, so you have come through the wet and dark, just to gratify a sick man's whim ?"

"I would do more than that to oblige you, sir," returned Queenie, with genuine compassion in her voice. The wan suffering face, the wasted hand, stirred a world of pity in her soul. Lonely, unloved, and dying — resentment faded out of her memory at a spectacle so pathetic, so truly pitiful.

"What ! do more than be sorry for me ?"—with sardonic humor in his voice. "You would give more than a drop of water to poor Dives in torment ? Do you remember, girl, that you dared to pity me before ?"

"My pity will not harm you, sir."

"Ay, why not ?"

"Now you are so very ill, it may even do you

good to remember that we feel no bitterness towards you, that we forgive all the wrong done to us. Why do you look towards that door? do you want anything?"

"That woman has forgotten my medicine," he muttered, "and I have the strange sinking again. Hirelings are not worth the price of the bread they eat."

"Let me give it you," returned Queenie, rising, and mixing the draught; but he shook his head. "You must call her; I cannot raise myself, and the least movement gives me pain."

"She has gone downstairs; let me try what I can do. You must not wait, indeed, Mr. Calcott; your lips are turning blue and livid. I am used to nursing; I could lift mamma, and I have carried Emmie about so much lately." As she spoke Queenie skilfully raised the invalid and put the glass to his lips.

"If thine enemy hunger, feed him; and if he thirst, give him drink." Why did these words come into the sick man's mind as he felt the support of the strong young arm, and drank the reviving draught from her hand?

"There, you are better now," went on Queenie cheerfully, putting the pillow comfortably under his head. Mr. Calcott looked at her strangely, and then he was silent for a long time.

"You are poor," he began at last.

"Yes, we are very poor; you remember I told you so."

"Ah, true! I forgot all that. You are used to nursing too. Mrs. Morton is a very capable person, but I should like some one who would read to me and amuse me. I—" hesitating slightly—"I would pay you handsomely if you would come to me."

Queenie turned pale, and her eyes filled with tears. "Come to you at once?"

"To be sure. Do you think a dying man can talk about the future? I would make it worth your while," he continued, as though anticipating some objection. "You shall ask your own sum; I will buy your services at your own price."

"Hush! please don't talk so, you are only paining me; it is impossible. What? now! come at once! I could not leave Emmie."

"What folly!" he interrupted harshly.

"Have you not told me that you are fighting single-handed against the world ; that Emmie, as you call her, is next door to starving ? Were these falsehoods ? were you imposing on my credulity that you refuse real tangible help when it comes ?"

"I only refuse what is impossible for me to accept," returned Queenie in a choking voice. "Ah, you cannot understand, you do not know, that since that terrible night I have nearly lost Emmie." And then she told him, as well as emotion would allow her, of all she had been through.

"Humph ! that's why you have grown thin and unsubstantial-looking. I thought there was some change in you. You ought to get heavy damages from those women ; but the child is getting well, you say ?"

"Yes ; but she is not strong, and requires the greatest care. No one could watch over her as I do ; I understand her ; I know her every look ; I see directly she is weary or overdone. It will be months before I can safely leave her, even with Mr. Runciman and Molly."

"I should think the atmosphere of that precious school could not be conducive to the welfare of a nervous invalid," interrupted Mr. Calcott irritably.

"We shall not be there much longer," returned Queenie quietly. "At Easter we are going to Mr. Runciman's for a little visit; and as soon as the warm weather comes I'm going to take Emmie into the country to get strong."

"Indeed I did not know you could afford such luxuries," with biting sarcasm.

Queenie colored, but she went on steadily—

"Neither can we. We are indebted to the kindness of a school friend, who has offered to take us home. I have barely money for our railway journey there and back; but we shall manage somehow."

Mr. Calcott glanced at the girl's shabby dress and cloak, then at the brave face, and somehow his sarcasm vanished.

"I suppose you are too proud to take a five-pound note?" somewhat brusquely.

Queenie hesitated, and then her face grew crimson.

"Speak out ; you are too proud, eh ?"

"I would not take it for myself, but for Emmie's sake I should be thankful."

"I know nothing about Emmie," with a frown. "If you take it it is for yourself mind ; the child is nothing to me ; I cannot and will not recognize her."

"If I take it it will be to buy her comforts," replied Queenie, scrupulously.

"Spend it how you will, it is nothing to me," was the irritable answer. "I have made you a good offer to-night. By the sacrifice of a few months you could earn enough to maintain both the child and yourself for more than a year to come, and you choose to refuse the offer. I can say no more."

"I dare not accept it. If anything were to happen to Emmie, I should never forgive myself. Mamma always told me that we must never leave a certain duty for an uncertain one ; and Emmie is my duty."

"Pshaw ! female sophistry. The child would do well enough ; children always do."

Queenie shook her head.

"It goes to my heart to refuse you. If I were free I would come and serve you, not only for the sake of the money, but because mamma loved you so dearly."

"There, there; I can bear no more," returned the invalid impatiently.

Queenie took the hint and rose.

"I am sorry if I have tired you. May I come again?"

"Yes; come again to-morrow at the same time. Tell Runciman that he is to bring the business letters here in the morning instead of Smiler. Please ring the bell for Mrs. Morton, and be careful to close the door very carefully, as the least noise jars on me. What are you waiting for now, child?"

"I only thought I should like to shake hands with you, sir."

"There, good-night," was the brusque response; but the hand was cold and shaking, as the warm girlish one closed round it.

"Good-night, and thank you for Emmie," returned Queenie, brightly.

Caleb sat up and rubbed his eyes drowsily as

the girl entered. "How long you have been, Miss Queenie, dear! What has he been saying to you?"

"Hush! I will tell you as we go along. He is very ill—dying, Caleb, and it is very, very sad to see him. Look what he has given me," opening her hand and showing the crisp bank-note; "I think he meant it as a sort of return for bringing me out in the wet, but of course I shall not keep it; it is all for Emmie."

Queenie's visits to Mr. Calcott became almost a daily recurrence. It soon became a rule for Caleb to fetch her when lessons were over and Emmie was asleep, to sit with the invalid an hour before he retired to rest. Miss Titheridge had probably received some private hint from Caleb, for she made no objection to these frequent absences; but, on the contrary, encouraged them by gracious enquiries after Mr. Calcott's health when she encountered Queenie.

The girl soon grew used to these visits. Mr. Calcott, it is true, never varied in his manner. He still received her brusquely, and his remarks

were as pungent and sarcastic as ever, with a strange bitterness that often brought tears to her eyes ; but still, in a vague, uncertain sort of way, she felt he liked to have her there beside him. Once or twice she fancied his eyes had brightened at her approach, even while he scolded her querulously for being late. He accepted her services reluctantly, and often found fault with her for feminine awkwardness. Her efforts never gave him pleasure. No word of commendation crossed his lips, no thanks for the unselfishness that brought her out evening after evening, after a hard day's work, to minister to a discontented old man ; and yet Queenie felt rewarded if his eyes turned wistfully to the door as she entered, or a sigh of relief betrayed that his loneliness was at an end.

“ Master has been that restless that Morton can do nothing to please him,” Gurnel informed her once when she was unusually late. Queenie smiled and quickened her steps ; she knew what she had to expect.

“ I suppose you have got tired of your good work,” was the only welcome she received ; but

Queenie had learned how to parry such remarks without rousing the old man's jealous temper. She turned the subject laughingly, by telling him of the purchases she had made out of the money he had given her.

"What! all those things out of five pounds!" he grunted incredulously; "frock, jacket, and hat, and I don't know what beside. I thought I said the money was for yourself."

"Emmie is so delighted with everything," she went on. "The pleasure brought a tinge of color to her face; it would have done you good to have seen her."

"Humph! I dare say there will be much good done to me to-night, after being kept an hour waiting for other folk's pleasure."

"Work must be done, you know," returned Queenie lightly. "The term is nearly over, and then I shall be more at leisure."

"Indeed, is the grand visit to be given up?" —sarcastically; but there was suppressed eagerness in his voice.

"Oh, there is a whole month before that; we need not talk of that yet. Now let me read to

you ;" but though the book was an interesting one, and Queenie read in her best manner, Mr. Calcott's thoughts seemed wandering.

When the last day of the term arrived the sisters left Granite Lodge. Emmie, who had been in a state of pleasurable excitement all the morning, grew a little tearful and silent towards the close of the day.

Queenie, who was overwhelmed with business, and had scarcely time to bid her friend good-bye, and add a few words as to future arrangement, at parting, suddenly missed Emmie in her usual corner. She had searched the house without success, and was becoming terribly frightened, when a maid informed her that she had seen Emmie toiling up the garret stairs with the kitten in her arms.

The little girl was curled up in her usual place, gazing dreamingly out of the window, when Queenie entered. The little face looked small and white under the cap-border ; the soft yellow down peeping out here and there gave her an infantile appearance.

"Dear Emmie, why have you come here ?"

began her sister, reprovingly; but Emmie held up her finger and stopped her.

"Hush! of course we ought to say good-bye to the poor old place; don't you know prisoners sometimes kiss the walls of their cell, though they are really not sorry to leave it. We have had nice times here, Queen, though we have been so very unhappy. As I sat here before you came up, I felt as though there must be two Emmie's; I feel so different to the old one that used to hide her face and cry when it got dark."

"Then we will not stay and make ourselves miserable in this gloomy place," interrupted Queenie, anxiously. "Caleb will be here directly, and we must go and say good-bye to Miss Titheridge. Come, Em, come," and Emmie obeyed reluctantly.

Miss Titheridge looked embarrassed and nervous, and Queenie purposely shortened their leave-taking. When Emmie's turn came she held up her face to be kissed.

"Good-bye," she said, looking at the governess with her large serious blue eyes. "Thank you for being kind to me at last. I am so sorry you

could not love me ; but I dare say it was my fault ; " and as Miss Titheridge bent over her something beside a kiss was left on the child's thin cheek.

Caleb's little house seemed a perfect haven of refuge that night. Queenie felt almost too happy as she arranged their effects in the little dark room that Caleb had set apart for his guests. It seemed wrong of her to be so light-hearted while the future was so uncertain.

Emmie lay in the big brown bed, with ugly drab curtains edged with green, and watched her as she moved about actively, singing over her work. The room had a side window looking over a stone-mason's yard ; the white monuments gleamed in the red evening light ; a laburnum shook long sprays of gold against the panes ; Molly's linnet sung against the wall ; Caleb in his old coat walked contentedly up and down the narrow garden path between his currant-bushes ; some children were playing among the slabs and ledges of stone. How humble it was, and yet how peaceful ; a quiet waiting-place until the new work came ready to her hand. One evening, as

she was sitting sewing at the open window, Caleb beckoned her mysteriously to join him in his favorite walk between the currant-bushes.

"My dear," he began, his eyes becoming round as usual, and betraying a tendency to hesitate slightly between his words, "I want your advice, your assistance, indeed. I have—hem—I may say—I have a delicate and peculiar commission on hand,—hem,—and I—in short, a lady's advice would be most suitable, and, I may say, satisfactory. Molly is a good creature," he continued, after a pause, "an admirable creature, of course ; but in this her advice is of such a nature that I must own I should hesitate to adopt it. She is fond of bright colors, you see ; and as long as there is plenty of red and green in a pattern she would find no fault."

"Do you want me to choose a new dress for Molly ? I suppose that is what you mean."

"Molly ! oh dear, no ! nothing of the kind, Miss Queenie dear. The fact is, a young friend of mine, is—hem—is, in short, going to be married, that is, she is going to be married some day, no doubt."

"Indeed! a friend of yours, do you say?" Caleb nodded still more mysteriously.

"The circumstances are peculiar; yes, I am certainly right in saying they are peculiar," continued Caleb, reflecting; "but she—that is, he—has commissioned me to get her some things suitable to a lady in such a position, as the same peculiar circumstances prevent her from choosing the articles herself. She is not going to be married yet," rubbing his head with a little vexed perplexity; "but she is going on a visit to his friends, and he—the young man I mean. Ah! that's it," with a chuckle, as though he had discovered a way out of some difficulty—"he, the young man, my dear, has a proper pride, and wants her to make a favourable impression on his relations; do you see, Miss Queenie."

"Is she so very poor?" returned Queenie, innocently, and not at all suspecting the veracity of Caleb's garbled-up tale.

"Poor! well I may say that she is poor—extremely so," with a burst of candor; "but a lady,—dear, dear,—as much a lady as yourself, Miss Queenie."

"I should have thought her lover could have chosen some pretty things for her himself," observed Queenie, a little incredulously, at this juncture. "He must be a poor sort of lover," she thought, "to devolve such an interesting duty on her old friend."

Caleb coughed, and stopped to inspect a promising gooseberry bush ; and then he discovered his pipe was out, and must replenish it ; it was quite five minutes, too, before it would draw properly, and Queenie got impatient for her question to be answered.

"Why cannot he get them himself?" she enquired, a little scornfully ; "he need not have troubled you."

"Well, you see, a man with a broken leg is not particularly active, and shopping does not suit the complaint," was the oracular answer, as Caleb puffed volumes of smoke, bravely. "No, no, that sort of thing is not good for the complaint," continued the old man, with another chuckle ; "so you see, Miss Queenie dear, if you don't help me a bit with your advice I shall have to go to Molly after all, and shall come back with a plaid

satin, or something that wouldn't suit the pretty creature at all. Come, now,"—coaxingly,—“what should you think she would like best?”

Queenie wrinkled her white forehead reflectively,—poor and pretty, and with a lover laid up at a distance. This began to get interesting; she must do her best to help this unknown girl.

“Well, if I were judging for myself,” she returned at last, “I should think a nice useful black silk—”

“Ah! that is just it,” interrupted Caleb, enthusiastically. “I ought to have thought of that; of course, a black silk.”

“And,” continued Queenie, now thoroughly absorbed in a mental review of this ideal wardrobe, “a pretty spring suit,—brown, I think, if it would suit her,—and a brown hat with a pheasant wing. I think she would look nice in that.”

“Brown, of course; the idea of my never thinking of brown,” repeated Caleb, clapping his hands, “the very color of all others that would suit her. Go on, Miss Queenie dear.”

"Well, I suppose her lover does not wish to be extravagant, it is not her trousseau, you see ; some nice collars and cuffs and ties, and perhaps handkerchiefs, and some brown gloves—and, oh ! she must have a box to put them in. If she be so very poor, you see, it will not do for her to dress too handsomely," observed the young girl, sententiously.

Caleb dashed down his pipe, and very nearly executed a *pas de seul* on the garden path ; his blue eyes danced with glee.

"There now, there now ; did I not say you had a wise head, Miss Queenie ! The very thing of all other ! a box !—and Molly and I would never have thought of it—a really good handsome box that would make the luggage porters stare, eh ?" enquiring.

"Well no ; a nice black leather one, like Cathy's, I think," returned Queenie, with quiet relish. During the remainder of the evening, as she sat over some plain sewing she was doing for Emmie, she thought of Caleb's friend a little enviously, and wondered how she would like the nice things. She wished Caleb would tell her a

little more about her ; but, to her surprise, he did not recur again to the subject.

About a fortnight after this conversation, as she returned from her usual evening visit to Mr. Calcott, she paused for a moment at the door of her room, transfixed in surprise.

A large leather trunk blocked up the room ; two white letters, Q. M., stared her full in the face ; a sudden revelation of the truth drove the flush to her very brow.

Could it really be ? She lifted the lid gingerly, almost trembling with excitement ; her hand came in contact with the folds of a black silk ; lower down lay the brown dress and jacket ; the little hat with its pheasant plume nestled snugly in one division. Queenie had just a hurried peep at piles of snowy handkerchiefs, and collars, and cuffs, at French gloves, and soft streaks of color in the shape of silken scarf's, and then she rushed breathlessly down into the parlor, where Emmie was reading fairy tales to Caleb.

Emmie put down her book and clapped her hands at the sight of Queenie's face. Caleb's eyes twinkled over his pipe, but he said nothing.

"Oh, Queen, isn't it lovely ! better even than Cinderella's pumpkin coach. Isn't it a dear, dear secret, for Caleb and me to have kept all this time ?"

"Do you think the young man with the broken leg will be satisfied with my taste," chuckled the old man. Queenie put her arms round his neck, her face was rosy with pleasure.

"Oh, Caleb, is it for me ! really for me ! the box with all those beautiful things ? Did you buy it for me, dear, because you knew I was so poor and shabby, and you did not like me to go among those strange people with my old clothes ? Oh, Caleb, how could you, how could you, and you so poor yourself ?" caressing him gratefully.

"Miss Queenie, dear," confessed the old man, with tears in his eyes, "if I had the money I would not begrudge you satin and diamonds ; nothing would be too good for you, my pretty ; nothing that old Caleb would not get you ; but it is not me, bless your dear heart, that you have to thank for all your things."

Queenie's face fell, her arms dropped to her side.

"Not you, Caleb?"

"Why no," he returned, slightly embarrassed ; "I would have bought them and gladly if I had had the money, which I am free to confess is not the case. You have another and a richer friend at court than old Caleb."

"Do you mean to tell me," replied Queenie, sitting down, quite pale with the surprise, "that—that—"

"Ah, I knew you would guess it!" interrupted Caleb, sagaciously. "'Find out what she requires for her visit, and get it, Runciman,' he said to me ; and, as I observed once before on a similar occasion, you might have knocked me over with a feather. 'Ask some woman to help you, for we neither of us know much of a girl's farthingales and furbelows, I fancy,' he said, grimly enough ; and so, my dear, I made bold, and invented that pleasing little fiction in order to get at some of your ideas."

"Mr. Calcott has given me all those things ?" she repeated ; and then for the moment she could say no more.

## CHAPTER X.

## “THE LITTLE COMFORTER.”

“Thy love  
Shall chant itself its own beatitudes,  
After its own life wailing. A child kiss,  
Set on thy sighing lips, shall make thee glad ;  
A poor man, served by thee, shall make thee rich ;  
A rich man, helped by thee, shall make thee strong.  
Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense  
Of service which thou renderest.”—*E. B. Browning.*

On her next visit, which was to be her last before they started for Hepshaw, Mr. Calcott received Queenie with more than his usual acrimony.

“In my time punctuality used to be considered a virtue,” he said, severely, with an ominous glance at the time-piece, which showed Queenie she was some minutes late. “Never mind; I dare say this is the last time you will have to amuse a troublesome old man.”

Queenie’s eyes filled with tears.

"Please don't talk so, Mr. Calcott; not tonight, at least, when I have to bid you good-bye for so many weeks."

"Aye, you will be very sorry for that, no doubt," ironically.

"Yes," she returned, with the sweet candor natural to her; "far more sorry than I would have expected or believed."

He laughed a low, bitter laugh, that went to the girl's heart.

"And you think I shall credit that?"

"Why not? one must always believe the truth," she returned, simply. "When I first came here I pitied you dreadfully, and yet I was half afraid of you. I do not fear you at all now."

"Indeed!"

"Your moroseness used to terrify, but now I do not seem to mind all your hard words; they lurk under kind actions, and so they have lost their sting. It was kindness that prompted you to send me all those pretty things."

"Humph, I see the reason for all this civility now."

Queenie's eyes rested tenderly on the worn, cadaverous face.

“ You see I am longing to thank you, and yet I hardly know how to do so without giving you offence.”

“ I hate thanks,” gruffly. “ There, girl, that will do; let us get to our reading,” and Queenie, who saw that unusual suffering lay at the bottom of the old man's bitter humor, did not venture to thwart him just then.

When the time came for her to go she put the marker in the book carefully, and leant over him. As she touched him softly with her hand, he started and opened his eyes; they had a strange, almost a wild look in them for a moment.

“ I could have sworn it was Emily's hand,” he muttered. “ Hers was always soft and warm, like the breast of a little bird. Pshaw! what rubbish I am talking; you have read me to sleep, child; I have been dreaming.”

“ Let me give you your draught, and talk to you a little; to-morrow I am going away, you know.”

"Aye, to-morrow, and a good many to-morrows." She still held the cold, nerveless fingers in hers, and her voice was very gentle in his ear.

"I shall not like to think you are missing me ; when evening comes I shall wish I were here beside you, reading to you and lulling your pain. It seems to me," continued the girl, speaking still more softly, "as though in some strange way, and out of strange circumstances, we have grown to be friends."

He sighed, and turned restlessly on his pillow, but there was no repulse.

"You have been very good to me, and I shall love to remember your goodness. I think mamma was right when she said you had a heart. To-morrow I am going away—as you know—for a long, long time, and I want you to do me a favor."

"Pshaw ! I will do nothing blindfold," with a return of his old harshness ; but, under the half-closed eyelids, how he watched it—the bright speaking face !

"I want you to see Emmie. Hush ! do not

refuse,” as he gave utterance to an expression of impatience, almost disgust; “do not send me away less happy; do not refuse such a trifling request. If I have ever pleased you, if I have ever wiled away an hour of bitter pain, grant me this one favour: let the child stand here for a moment beside you.”

“Can you not leave a dying man in peace?” he began savagely, but his wrath faded before the girl’s mild glance. A brief spasm as of pain contracted his forehead, and his eyes closed.

“Have your foolish whim,” he muttered at last, almost inaudibly. “But what have I to do with children? I always hated them.”

“You will not hate Emmie,” returned Queenie as she hurriedly rose; “it is a fine evening, and she pleaded for me to bring her; ‘she wanted to see poor Uncle Andrew,’ she said.”

“Tell her not to call me that,” he exclaimed, angrily; but Queenie had already closed the door behind her.

Another minute, and the child stood beside his couch. The evening sun shone full upon her; she had grown tall and thin from her long illness;

the beautiful fair hair had been shaved off, but the soft yellow down peeped under the pretty cap border ; the great blue eyes had a solemn, unchildlike look in them ; a little wasted hand crept into the sick man's, and then patted it softly.

"Humph ! so you are better, aye, after nearly frightening that sister of yours to death," with a milder growl than Queenie expected.

"I am much better, thank you, Uncle Andrew," returned Emmie, gravely ; and then, perfectly undaunted by the grim, death-like face on the pillow before her, she clambered up on the bed beside it, and sat perched before him like a large soft-eyed bird. "Queenie thought I was going to die, and cried dreadfully every night ; Cathy told me so. Are you going to die, Uncle Andrew ?"

"It seems so," with a chord of ineffable bitterness rasping the thin voice.

Emmie leaned forward and stroked his face pityingly, with an old-fashioned womanliness that touched her sister greatly.

"I am so sorry ; it seems such a pity, just as

we were going to be fond of you ; it will be so strange, too, missing you out of my prayers every night, not that it will do any harm to go on saying, ‘God bless you,’ even after you are dead,” continued Emmie, reflectively, and in a slightly puzzled tone. “I asked Queenie about that, and she said she was not sure.”

In spite of his iron nerve Mr. Calcott winced slightly. This mere babe was playing round the feet of the king of Terror, while he was quailing secretly at the thought of the skeleton hand raised ready to strike ; it would find him in his darkness and loneliness ; his truest friend would come to him in the guise of an enemy. He was not a weak man, but at this moment the thought of his solitary death-bed caused him to thrill with premonitory pain and anguish. And then, with an odd transition of idea, he remembered how one night, when he was a lad, he had been wakened from his sleep by an awful storm ; and his little sister Emily had come crying to his bed-side, and had clung to him in an agony of terror. He remembered, as though it were yesterday, the little shivering figure in white,

the tangled fair hair under the cap border, the childish voice broken with sobs, "Oh Andrew, dear Andrew, take care of me; I am so frightened."

"You are only a girl, Emmie; boys and men are never frightened; why I don't know what fear is," he had returned, half scoffingly, and yet proud to shield her, and to feel himself strong in his boy's strength.

Ah, he knew what fear meant now. He thought, with the cold clammy sweat of superstitious terror, of what the coffin lid would cover; while a child's lips blessed him — him, Andrew Calcott, dead, unloved, and unremembered — blessed him in her prayers.

God pardon his wasted, misused life, he groaned, and grant him one single fragment of opportunity more, and he should not be unremembered; and the flicker of a strange smile curved Andrew Calcott's lips as he silently registered this vow.

"Are you sleepy or tired, Uncle Andrew?" asked Emmie, rather awe-stricken by the long silence and closed eye-lids, and still more by the

smile. “When you lay like that, so still and white,” continued the child, “you reminded me of the figure of the old Crusader—a knight I think he was—on the tomb I saw once in church. Do you know what I was thinking about when I watched you ?”

He shook his head.

“I was wondering if you felt afraid—to die, I mean.”

“Well, child; what then ?” regarding her strangely.

“I used to be terribly afraid, you know,” creeping closer, and whispering confidentially. “When I sat alone in the old garret,—ah, the poor old garret ; I don’t hate it quite so much now,—and it got dark, and the silence had odd voices in it, I used to think about mamma and want to go to her; only I could not get to her without dying, and that troubled me.”

“Hush, Emmie,” interrupted her sister, softly; but Mr. Calcott waved her aside, and bade her let the child speak, and Queenie drew back again into the shade of the curtain.

“I used to sit for ever so long, and fancy how

it would be. I fainted once ; and then I thought it would be like that, only I was afraid I should feel terribly cold and lonely when I woke and found myself alone in a strange place, however beautiful it might be ; and then Queenie took me to see that picture, and after that I did not mind at all."

"What picture, little one ?"

"Of a girl, not much older than I, asleep with her arms so,"—crossing hers gravely over her breast,—“and sliding up a great pathway of light, just as I saw a little boat once floating in the moonlight. Fancy floating asleep between the stars, and right into heaven !”

A half-groan answered the child, but she was too absorbed to notice it.

“I never forgot the picture ; it made me so happy to think of it. I shall not mind dying a bit now ; I shall just cross my arms, as the girl did, and shut my eyes, and when I wake up I shall see mamma smiling at the door ; and perhaps,” finished the child solemnly, “He will come to me, instead of letting me go very far in the great dazzling place to find Him.”

“Him !”

“Our Lord, you know ; I shall want to see Him most. Uncle Andrew, when I say my prayers to-night I shall tell Him that you are afraid, and ask Him to let mamma be the first to meet you ; and not a great splendid angel with wings, but just mamma, looking, oh, so beautiful ! and smiling as she used to smile.”

“God bless you, child ; there, leave me ; take her away, or I will not answer for myself. I have the pain again ; those drops, quick ! Oh, merciful heavens ! only the boon of another day, one more day.”

“Hush ! you are only agitating yourself ; you are not really worse,” returned Queenie, tenderly, wiping the moisture from his forehead. “If you calm yourself the attack will pass off. Emmie, darling, you must leave him now ; he is too tired to talk any more ;” and the child gently obeyed, after kissing him timidly on the cheek.

“You must go too, I suppose,” laying a delaying hand on her dress nevertheless.

“Yes ; but it is only good-bye for a little while,” returned Queenie, trying to speak cheer-

fully, but her eyes filling with tears. "When I come back we must have some more nice talks, and quiet cosy times together. You will miss me; I am sorry and grieved to think how you will miss me," finished the girl, faltering sadly over her words; "but Emmie and I will think of you and talk of you all the time we are away."

"Aye, do; but it is good-bye for all that," he returned, with a strange look at her. "You have meant well by me, I believe; thank you for all you have done for me."

"No, no; it has been so little, and it has made me happy to do it," exclaimed Queenie, and now the tears fairly brimmed over. As he held her hand in the weak, nerveless grasp of old age she stooped over him, with an infinite yearning of pity and sorrow, and kissed him softly on the forehead, as a daughter might have done.

In the years to come Queenie never regretted that kiss.

## CHAPTER XI.

## CHURCH-STILE HOUSE.

“ If we were to form an image of dignity in a man, we should give him wisdom and valor, as being essential to the character of manhood. In the like manner, if you describe a right woman in a laudable sense, she should have gentle softness, tender fear, and all those parts of life which distinguish her from the other sex ; with some subordination to it, but such an infirmity that makes her still more lovely.”—*Sir Richard Steele.*

IT was with somewhat mixed feelings that Queenie bade farewell to her old friend Caleb Runciman the next day ; and even Emmie looked back regretfully at the little dark house.

“ I shall never love any other quite so well ; shall you, Queen ? I cannot bear big houses and large halls. We shall miss Caleb and Molly dreadfully ; but then we shall only be a month away.”

“ Hush ! a month is a long time ; a great deal

may happen in it," returned her sister thoughtfully, a little awe mingled with her pleasure. They were going to a strange place, amidst unknown faces ; they would make new friends, feel fresh interests, think new thoughts.

They, too, were standing hand in hand on the threshold of a new world—a world full of all manner of delightful possibilities ; they had broken with the dreary past, and now the future lay before them. Queenie took off her pretty brown hat and bared her forehead to the breeze with a little gasp. "How nice it is to feel young and strong and free. You and I are free, Emmie ; yes, free as this delicious wind," finished the young girl with a little quiver of ecstasy in her voice.

A thousand vague imaginations flitted across her mind as she sat watching the flying milestones, while Emmie, wearied out with excitement, slept with her head upon Queenie's shoulder. "I feel afraid of nothing to-day ; I am sure I shall find work ; I do not mind how humble or hard it is. I think I feel young for the first time. After all, there are only two things to fear in life

—debt and unkindness. A few loving words will sweeten even a crust of bread and a cup of water. Emmie and I will not mind a little hardship if we can only be together ; but how nearly I lost my treasure,” with an involuntary shudder that roused Emmie. She sat up and rubbed her eyes.

“ I think this must be Hepshaw, we are going more slowly ; what a little journey, Queen ! Oh, yes ; there is Cathy on the platform, looking into all the carriages. She does not see us ; what fun ! ”

“ Indeed she does, Emmie ; she is laughing and nodding at us. Let me help you out, dear ; ” but almost before she descended from the carriage she felt herself seized by a pair of arms, and Cathy’s bright face confronted her.

“ Oh, you dear things ! to think you have really arrived ! I have been here at least an hour and a half, till the station-master thought I must have taken leave of my senses. I would have it the train was due at three. Give me a kiss, Emmie. Bless me ! how that child grows. My dear Queen,” eyeing her with intense curiosity

and satisfaction, “if you are not ashamed of walking with me in my old hat I think we will move on, as they say in London.”

“Certainly, if you will lead the way,” returned Queenie politely; but her friend remained still in the same attitude of delighted astonishment.

“My dear, when I have recovered a little; but whatever will Langley say? I feel I am bringing you to the house under false pretences; the victim of misfortune appears suddenly in the garb of an elegant female, with a golden pheasant’s plume in her hat. You lovely old Queen! you look so nice that I quite long to hug you. Ted will be fairly overpowered when he sees us.”

“Cathy, really you must not talk such nonsense,” returned Queenie, blushing; “the man is waiting for our tickets, and Emmie is tired.”

“Ah! now I recognize Madam Dignity, of Granite Lodge. Come along, then, through this little gate. We have to wait at the Deer-hound inn for a few minutes till Ted and the waggonette come up from Warstdale; that is where Garth’s granite quarry is. Garth is so sorry that he could not meet you himself.”

Queenie did not answer ; she felt a little shy and silent all of a sudden. She followed Cathy down the steep little road bordered with plane trees, and cumbered with piles of neatly-hewn planks, to the grey old inn. What a quiet country corner it looked, she thought. The village, or market town as it really was, lay beyond ; a long road went stretching away into the distance ; across the road were granaries, and a sunny little garden ; a hen with a family of yellow ducklings were scratching in the dust ; dark clumps of plane trees were everywhere. The grey old landlord stood regarding them from the porch ; the comely hostess came bustling out to meet them.

“ Come in, Miss Clayton ; the waggonette isn’t here yet, and it is a bit hot in the sun. Mr. Logan passed just now on his way to the quarry and he would have it his big umbrella did not shelter him at all.”

“ It is sure to be full of holes,” returned Cathy carelessly, as she led the way into the inn. Queenie had a glimpse as she passed of a long, low-ceiled room with cross-beams and a deep window, and then of the great stone kitchen with

its long settle and wide open fireplace. As they followed the landlady up the broad staircase Emmie clapped her hands delightfully.

"What a beautiful room ! I never saw a glass cupboard of china before like that ; and there are two tables and rocking-chairs ; and oh, dear ! what a hard, slippery sofa, and what a funny, cracked piano ; and, I do declare, there are at least four or five large silver tea-pots, and a great stand of wax flowers."

"This is where they have the agricultural dinners and do all the speechifying. Sit down, Queenie, do ; how I wish that long laddie of ours would drive up ; but it is just like Ted, to be late for everything."

"I do not mind waiting," returned her friend quietly. She was quite as much excited as Cathy and Emmie, though she did not show it as they did. She stood looking out of the small-paned window, through the screen of red geraniums, at the sunny little garden across the road.

Two buxom lasses were carrying piles of white, freshly-dried linen to the inn ; the patient hen was still clucking devotedly at the heels of her

foster-family ; some long-necked geese waddled aimlessly across the road ; a sweet odor of fresh hay came from the granary in front ; the trampling of hoofs and the loud cool swishes of water, mingled with the hissing of a red-headed ostler, sounded from the stable-yard. Queenie looked out dreamily, until the noise of advancing wheels broke on her ear.

Cathy started up.

“ There is Ted ! look at him brandishing his whip and making up for lost time by driving furiously. What a shame to treat poor old Minnie so ! she is quite covered with foam. Ted, you tiresome fellow, what do you mean by keeping my friends waiting ? ”

“ I beg your friends’ pardon ; am I late ? Non-sense, Cath, you are such a one to exaggerate ; come, jump in. Where’s the luggage ? Give a hand, you fellows there, and stow in the traps ; the mare’s fidgetty, and won’t stand.”

“ No wonder, when you have fretted her to a fever ; you would catch it from Garth if he saw her. Now then, Ted, where are your manners ? this is Miss Marriott and her little sister Emmie.”

The young man took off his straw hat rather gravely, and then descended leisurely from the vehicle, and commenced stroking the mare's neck, casting furtive glances at the new-comers as he did so.

He was a mere boy, as Cathy had described him, barely twenty ; his sister's name of the "long laddie" suited him perfectly, for he was certainly the tallest specimen of youthful manhood that Queenie had ever seen ; his slenderness added to his height, he towered above them like a boy giant.

Queenie liked his face ; it was good-looking, though somewhat freckled, with a pair of mild brown eyes ; at the present it manifested nothing but an expression of obstinate good-humor.

"Now, then, Cathy, jump in ; the mare won't stand, I tell you."

"I don't see why we are to hurry ourselves," replied his sister, provokingly. "Did you meet Mr. Logan on the Warstdale road, Ted ?"

Ted laughed.

"Poor old Christopher ? yes ; there he was, trudging away, with his blue spotted handkerchief

tucked under his felt hat, and the sun scorching him through the rents in his umbrella, and his boots white with dust, such a figure of fun.

“ You ought to have insisted on bringing him back ; he will have a sunstroke. Think of Miss Cosie’s feeling,” and Cathy looked a little grave, “ You are such a child, Ted ; you never think of anything. Now drive slowly through the town, that I may point out the various landmarks to Miss Marriott.”

“ Ted followed his instructions *au pied de la lettre*, by proceeding at a funeral pace, while Minnie snorted indignantly at her driver’s tight hand, and whisked her tail angrily at the flies.

“ Oh ! do go on a little faster, Ted ; every one will be staring at us if we go at this ridiculous pace,” pleaded his sister, trying hard to be dignified and not to laugh. These passages in arms between her and her younger brother were not new in the household. Queenie was amused to see that he merely pushed his hand through his rough light hair and jogged on at the same pace.

Queenie had plenty of time to note the surroundings, though she persisted then, and long

afterwards, in regarding Hepshaw as a village, in spite of its dignity as a market-town. She admired the game-keeper's white house, set so prettily among the sycamores, or plane trees, and the picturesque police-station, with its cottage porch and bright-bordered flower-garden.

The long broad road, with its stone cottages and small substantial houses, set so snugly in patches of garden ground, pleased her greatly ; everything looked so fresh and still. By-and-bye they came to the market-place, with its few bright-looking shops, and the boys' school-house ; just opposite was a curious little building with small half-moon windows, that Queenie took for the market, but which proved to be the girls' school.

"I think it was used for the market once upon a time," explained Cathy ; "is it not a queer little place ? those high crescent-shaped windows are so absurd. Look behind you, Queen ; that is the prettiest peep of all," as she pointed to some green meadows, behind which were the church, vicarage, and another house, standing high above the town, and perfectly embosomed with trees.

The road branched into two now ; further on were some still more picturesque cottages, and even a villa or two, but the mare was jogging up a steep country road now, and in another moment they were driving across a tiny moat and into a court-yard, bordered with a row of dark sycamores, with a side glimpse of a steep little house adjoining the church-yard.

“ Welcome to Church-Stile House. Isn’t it a gloomy old place ? and yet Langley and I love it. Oh ! there is Langley,” as a black clad figure, taller and more erect even than Cathy’s, came swiftly down the garden path towards them.

“ How late you all are ; I have been expecting you for an hour at least. I am so glad you have come, Miss Marriott ; Cathy is never weary of talking about her friends. So this is really Emmie ?” kissing the child and holding out a cordial hand to Queenie.

The voice was sweet and pleasant, the accent singularly refined ; nevertheless, the first sight of Langley Clayton gave Queenie a curious shock. The likeness between the sisters was striking, but it was a likeness that pained rather than

pleased ; it was Cathy's face grown prematurely old, and deprived of color and animation, a face that had sharpened and grown weary under the pressure of some carking care ; the eyes were gentle, but unrestful ; the long wave of hair worn over the forehead in Cathy's style was mixed with grey. The touch of the thin hot hand lingered long on Queenie's palm.

"I am so glad, so very glad, you have come," repeated Langley, with a soft flickering smile. This flickering smile was peculiar to Langley ; it was all that ever broke up the subdued gravity of manner habitual to her. Queenie soon discovered that she never laughed ; when pleased or excited this odd uncertain smile would play tremulously round the mouth for a moment and then fade away.

"It is so good of you to have us," returned Queenie, feeling strangely subdued all of a sudden, as she followed Langley's tall figure into the square little hall, and then into a sitting-room, pleasantly littered with books and work, and with a certain old-fashioned cosiness in its arrangements. The deep basket-work chairs,

lined with chintz cushions, looked deliciously inviting, and so did the low couch and reading-table. One high narrow window commanded a view of the steep little lawn, running down to the lane ; the other, to Queenie's surprise, opened full on the church-yard. Within a few feet were tall palings, and a granite obelisk ; then some sparsely-scattered tombstones, and a long terrace bordered by sycamores, and known by the name of the plane-tree walk.

"I am afraid it strikes you as very dismal," said Langley, softly, as they stood together at the windows ; "most people consider the obelisk a great eyesore. A few years ago there was not a single tombstone ; it is only now that they have begun to use the church-yard. It was just the church, and the green, and the plane-tree walk ; it was our garden then."

"I suppose one would get used to it in time," replied Queenie, somewhat evasively. Her healthy young vitality shivered a little at the incongruity between the warm cosiness of the life inside and the gleaming tombstones without, within a few feet of the fireside round which the family circle

gathered. "That terrace walk is very pretty, and the old church must be nice ; but—"

"But you think we ought always to be reading Hervey's 'Meditations,' and considering our latter end," broke in Cathy gaily. "Nothing of the kind, I assure you ; Garth grumbles, and declares he will build a new house for himself higher up the hill, and Ted agrees with him ; but I don't mind it in the least, and Langley likes it."

"Do you ?" asked Queenie, fixing her large brown eyes curiously on Langley's pale face.

"I love it," was the quiet answer.

"Well, what do you think of Langley ?" asked Cathy, when they had been duly installed in their large comfortable room. Miss Clayton had left them, taking Emmie with her, after having ministered to the child with her own hands. Her thoughtfulness for their comfort, and her gentle manipulation of Emmie touched Queenie's heart ; they had gone off together hand in hand, Emmie chattering confidentially to her new friend, and Cathy and she had ensconced themselves cosily on the low window-seat commanding a view of

the old church and church-yard. Queenie liked it better now ; after all it was strangely peaceful, God's Acre, as she loved to hear it called.

" Well, what do you think of this sister of mine ? " repeated her friend enquiringly.

" It is too soon to ask my opinion ; I have not made up my mind. Indeed I like her," as Cathy looked a little crestfallen ; " I should not wonder if I like her better the more I know her ; her voice is delicious, so low and musical, with a little trill in it, and her eyes looked so kindly at one."

" You are a model of reserve and prudence, my dear Madam Dignity. I always make up my mind the first minute whether I like a person or not, and never swerve an inch from my like or dislike afterwards ; that is feminine instinct, as I tell Garth. He is as tiresome as you are ; one can never get at his opinion of a person till he has thoroughly sifted and weighed them in a sort of moral balance of his own."

" I must say I think that he is wise."

" He has strong prejudices though ; small sins are sometimes heinous in his eyes. Garth's pride

is his chief fault ; he is quite absurd on some points. I have heard him say, more than once, that he would never marry a rich woman, however much he cared for her ; that a man should never be beholden to his wife for anything but love. Isn't that absurd ? ”

“ It is a fault on the right side.”

“ Nonsense ; I am tired of arguing the point with him. What has money to do in the case ? My husband might be as rich as Croesus, or as poor as a church-mouse, but if I liked him I would stick to him all the same. It is wrong pride in a man to let anything stand in the way if he likes a woman ; and Langley agrees with me.”

“ Does she ? ”

“ Yes ; she talks on these sort of subjects so nicely ; she is not a bit hard, as Garth is sometimes. He hates flirting and nonsense, and scolds me dreadfully if I make myself too amiable to any masculine individual ; but Langley always takes my part, and says I am only a child ; oh, she is a darling, or a saint, as Mr. Logan says.”

“ I am sure she is nice,” returned Queenie,

throwing a little enthusiasm into her voice. Cathy's frankness was embarrassing. That first evening she would have found it impossible to form any true opinion of Miss Clayton ; she was attracted and yet repelled by her, fascinated oddly by her voice and manner, and yet pained by a weariness and suppression for which there seemed no words. Was she unhappy or only tired ? was her life simply too monotonous for her ? had she wider yearnings that stretched out further, and were still unsatisfied ? had responsibility and over-much thought for others traced those worn lines, and wrinkled the smooth forehead ? Queenie found herself indulging in all manner of conjectures before the evening was over. That she was a woman infinitely loved and respected was plainly evident. Langley's opinion, Langley's sympathy, were always claimed, and never in vain ; the same patient attention, the same ready help, were given to all. She talked largely and well, and with a certain originality that made her an interesting companion ; and there was a breadth and large-mindedness about her

views that appealed strongly to Queenie's admiration.

"I do like her; I am sure I shall like her," she repeated for the third time, when Cathy had finished a long and animated harangue on her sister's merits. Cathy never stinted her praise; she spread it richly for those she loved, with a warmth of girlish hyperbole, and a generous glazing-over of manifest defects, that was rather refreshing in this censorious age.

"What was I saying? Hush! there is Garth; we must go down now," as a sudden melodious whistle sounded from below, at once deftly and sweetly answered by Cathy. "That means tea is ready, and his highness is hungry; come, we must not keep th' maister waiting."

The long low-ceiled dining-room looked snug and home-like as they entered. A tempting meal was spread for the travellers; a basket of roses and ferns garnished the table; some canaries sang in the window. Ted Clayton's long figure lounged in a rocking-chair; Emmie was standing beside him, looking like a little Puritan girl in her grey frock and close-bordered cap, making

friends with a white Maltese terrier ; a tall young man in a rough tweed coat leant over the back of his chair.

“ Miss Marriott, this is my brother Garth,” said Cathy, with an accent of pride in her voice, and Garth came forward with a pleasant smile.

What a good, thoughtful face it was ; certainly Cathy had not exaggerated. He was a handsome, a very handsome, man ; the chin was strongly moulded, and the mouth closed firmly, perhaps a trifle too firmly, under the dark moustache, but the blue-grey eyes had an honest kindly gleam in them ; the strong brown hand grasped Queenie’s with open-hearted friendliness.

Then and afterwards Queenie marvelled to herself, that Garth Clayton’s face came to her as a sudden revelation—with the instinctive recognition — of God’s noblest handiwork, — a really good man, good, that is, as poor human nature reads the word.

By-and-bye, when she knew him better, and all his faults were mapped out legibly before her, and she read him with the unerring light of a woman’s truest instinct, she ever gave him honor

as one who strove to walk nobly amongst his fellows, who stood as a Saul among men, a head and shoulders taller than they, by reason of the integrity and strength of purpose that lay within him.

"Keep innocency, and take heed to the thing that is right, and that shall bring a man peace at the last," were the words of the wise old King, to which Garth Clayton had ever given heed, keeping his hands clean with a whiteness that scorned to sully itself; standing aloof from small petty subterfuge and conventional untruths.

And yet there were strange blemishes in Garth Clayton's nature apparent to those who loved him. There was the narrowness of a pride that chose superiority rather than equality; that would stand aloof willingly from his equals, to rule, and rule wisely, over his inferiors; a born autocrat; despotic, yet not unkindly; somewhat tyrannical, unable to brook contradiction, childishly eager for praise, sensitive to a fault, jealous of dignity, and, by one of those strange subtleties that baffle metaphysicians, ever through life painfully conscious of hidden disadvantages.

For the clear intellect failed in depth and breadth, the calm common sense read itself truly ; and, too proud to stoop to others for knowledge, or to own ignorance, which it would have been truly great to confess, Garth Clayton would at times wrap himself round in a silent reserve that often mystified and perplexed others.

But there was always one who understood him, and that was Langley ; and by-and-bye there came another !

## CHAPTER XII.

## MISS COSIE.

" Well, to be sure, there never was a little woman so full of hope and tenderness, and love and anxiety, as this little woman was."—*Dickens.*

THE next hour passed pleasantly enough ; the Claytons devoted themselves to their guests' entertainment with an open-heartedness and simple hospitality that seemed natural to them.

In spite of the seclusion in which they lived, and the loneliness of their surroundings, they showed a perfection of breeding and a freedom of idea that surprised and delighted Queenie.

Her shyness and brief reserve soon vanished under the influence of their kindness. After the first few minutes she ceased to feel as though she were a stranger amongst them, and found herself entering into their plans and wishes as though she had known them for years.

" You see Cathy has talked to me about you all, and that is why I feel that I know you," she said, a little apologetically, lifting those strange eyes of hers to Garth. The young man flushed a little, but answered her kindly. Cathy's friend was rather formidable to him ; he had at least never met any one in the least like Queenie Marriott ; he felt far more at home with Emmie.

Nevertheless, he hid his embarrassment in his usual manner, as though half ashamed of it, by holding his head higher than usual, and laying down the law to his sisters in his dictatorial, good-humored way. Before tea was over Cathy was coaxing him to give them a picnic in the granite quarries, and he had hummed and hesitated a good deal over her request, "just to make himself of importance," whispered the wicked little sister to Queenie.

This led to some conversation about the quarry and quarry-men ; and here Garth found himself on his own ground, and talked much and well. He told Queenie, as they all strolled down the lane in the twilight, after Emmie had gone to bed, about his plans for the men's welfare

and improvement, “his boys,” as he termed them.

There seemed no limits to the good he did amongst them. Queenie felt her respect for him increase as she listened. He had given up one of his fields for cricket, and was himself their captain. He had instituted a reading-room; and Mr. Logan and he had formed a useful library. Here in the winter there were lectures given to the men by the Vicar, and Captain Fawcett, a neighbor of theirs, living in one of the villas lower down; or he himself read to them amusing passages from Dickens and Charles Lever. Garth's reading was none of the finest, as Queenie discovered for herself afterwards, and his singing was even worse in quality; but he would carry it through in a certain sturdy fashion of his own, that was somewhat amusing to the home critics.

Then he had schools for the children; and on alternate Sunday afternoons Mr. Logan held service in the school-room for those unable to come over to Hepshaw Church. More than this was not possible at present; but, as he modestly

informed his auditor, that his sister and he had done their best to organize a Sunday school, and to hold weekly Bible-class for such as choose to attend.

"Langley is great among the women," he observed with a bright smile; "she half lives at the cottages. I wish I were half as successful with my boys."

Queenie had yet to learn the value that Garth Clayton set on his boys, and how the best and highest part of his life was lived among them.

It was too dark to go down the village, as Queenie found they all called it; so Langley proposed they should go in by-and-bye and have some music. All the Claytons were musical except Garth, though Garth would have been the last to own his deficiency in this respect, and always held his own manfully in the family concerts, in spite of Cathy's sometimes insisting on stopping her ears with cotton-wool, and Ted's muttered observation, that he never knew that rooks cawed so loudly at night.

But Garth, generally so sensitive to criticism, cared nothing for these home witticisms. He

loved to air his lungs freely. He would burst into ‘Simon the Cellarer,’ or ‘the Vicar of Bray,’ or, better still, the often-abused ‘Village Blacksmith,’ with an honest disregard of all soft inflexion or minor chords that was painfully ludicrous. Ted and Cathy would throw themselves back in their chair and laugh noiselessly while the performance went on, and even Langley would bite her lip as her thin flexible fingers moved over the keys, the sounds she evoked almost swallowed up in that mighty bass.

I think, after all, though they laughed they loved to hear it, and would better have spared many a sweeter and choicer thing out of their home daily life. Garth never used half-measures. As Cathy once drily said, “He does everything thoroughly, even to making a noise, or singing, my dear,—I believe he calls it by that name.”

His laugh, too, was quite a surprise to Queenie when she heard it first; true, it was rather boyishly loud, but its delicious *abandon* of mirth was thoroughly infectious; none but Langley could ever hear it without joining in it. He would throw his head back, tossing back the

wave of dark hair as he did so, and the strong, even, white teeth would shine under the moustache ; while the pealing ha-ha would provoke corresponding mirth.

"It does one good to hear Garth Clayton laugh," Mr. Logan said once. "Only a man with a good conscience could laugh like that."

Queenie sat in her low basket-work chair, watching the ins and outs of this happy home-circle, too thoroughly interested and amused to dream of fatigue, though they had excused her singing that night on that score.

"I play very little; but I am supposed to sing tolerably well, that is, most people like my voice," she had said, quite frankly, in answer to their polite inquiries.

"She sings like an angel," was Cathy's verdict on this; "her voice is as fresh and clear and true as a lark's, but her fingers move over the keys a little like drum-sticks. I have often told you so, Queen; you put all your expression in your voice."

"I shall ask Miss Clayton to play my accompaniments," was Queenie's graceful answer. She

was not a bit annoyed at her friend's plain speaking; she liked to be told of her faults, and always set herself earnestly to mend them.

She practised sedulously after this evening, and gleaned all manner of hints from Langley.

" You must teach your fingers to speak ; they make acquaintance too stiffly with the keys," Langley said once to her. " You play so correctly, too ; it is such a pity you do not make us feel your music."

" My life has been all drudgery, you see," Queenie answered, humbly ; " there has been so little music in it, all the harmony got jarred out of it somehow. It has been only grinding at hard tasks, rubbing out sums for little girls, and putting them in again ; one couldn't learn to play tunes happily after that."

" But you sing, and so sweetly too."

" Ah, one learns that at church ; singing is part of one's religion," went on the girl reverently. " Nothing, however sordid and hard, can keep religion out of one's life ; it is just there always. Slaves sing, you know, and blind chaffinches, and poor miners under-ground over their work. It

keeps off bad thoughts. Oh, every one must sing," she finished with a smile, feeling that now for the first time in her young toil-worn life she was really resting on her oars.

Only resting for a brief space though ; by-and-bye she must take them up again, and row on bravely, against the stream perhaps, through marshes of sedgy weeds, fighting against a sullen current, perhaps drifted into deeper waters, but always with the broad blue sky above her, with tints of silver-lined clouds and possible sunshine, with hopes of safe harborage by-and-bye.

"I help myself, and therefore God will help me," Queenie had often said to herself in her sorely-tried youth. "I am afraid of nothing but doing wrong, and seeing Emmie suffer ; the rest I can bear ;" and this belief in herself saved them both.

"I am going to take you to see all our celebrities," announced Cathy solemnly at the breakfast table the next morning. "It is Langley's district day, and she will have nothing to say to any of us until lunch time. I propose that we

leave Emmie with Deborah to shell peas, while we do Hepshaw thoroughly."

"You must take me into the church first," observed Queenie, quite prepared for a long morning of delicious idleness, and in the true holiday spirit, alert and ready for any chance enjoyment. "I think there is something delightful in making acquaintance with a fresh place; even seeing fresh faces and hearing different voices gives me an odd indescribable sort of pleasure."

"You poor prisoner, yes," returned her friend sympathizingly, as they walked down the little garden path at the side of the house, and passed through the gate that opened on the churchyard, with its long terrace planted picturesquely with sycamores. "You are like a nun; you have only peeped at the world through a sort of invisible grating in Miss Titheridge's front parlor. You must make up for lost time, and live every moment thoroughly, as Garth and I do."

"That is just it; we don't half live our lives, we girls," replied Queenie dreamily; "half of us seem asleep; our faculties lie dormant, and get

rusted just for want of use. Miss Titheridge hung round my neck like a mill-stone; she literally crushed and pulverized all the best parts of me. It is being born again; it is a sort of moral regeneration, this feeling of freedom, this —oh, how can I make you understand it all, Cathy!"

"Seeing is believing," was the brusque answer. "You are a different creature, my dear Madam Dignity; you were like the frond of my favorite prickly shield fern that I was watching yesterday. You were all there, you know, the greenness and the freshness; but one could not get at you, you were so tightly swathed and coiled up."

"Yes," returned Queenie joyously; "and now I have found myself, my own individuality. I do think, seriously, that I have a larger capacity for living than other people. I have good health, that is one thing; my constitution is perfect; then I love work, I really and literally do, Cathy. Work braces one, it brings all one's faculties into play; work is rest; inaction, idleness; pleasure for the sake of pleasure, is simply

paralysis of one's higher life, it is premature old age."

"I wish I felt as you do," was the half-envious answer; "there is nothing little about you, Queenie, Garth said so last night."

"Did he? you should not have told me that, Cath."

"Why not pray. I just asked him how he liked you; I wanted to get at his opinion, you see, and he answered, just as gravely as though he were mentor, that he thought I had chosen my friend wisely, that you seemed a thoroughly healthy-minded girl."

"I think we will go into the church now," interrupted Queenie, somewhat irrelevantly. There was a little flush of pleasure in her cheek. She was glad he had said that; it was just the sort of praise she most coveted. She wanted Cathy's people to think well of her; if the truth must be known, she hungered for their appreciation as a half-starved child might have done. Crumbs would not satisfy her; condescension or kindness would not feed her thoroughly; she must have their full commendation, their equal friendship.

She had known them so long, she had seen them all so perfectly with her inner vision, that she could not feel as a stranger amongst them.

"I am so at home with them already," she had said to her friend the previous night. "There are no hard beginnings ; we are friends to start with ; there is no thawing, because there is no ice," she had said, with a certain vague enthusiasm, which, nevertheless, had been perfectly understood by Cathy. "One has so much hard up-hill work with most people," she had continued, talking out her thoughts half to herself. "Don't you know exactly how common-place people make acquaintance, how laboriously they try to find out one's tastes ! They do it about as gracefully as though they were breaking stones on the highway, or hammering flints as boys do to elicit sparks, and all the time looking as though they knew you had nothing in you worth coming to light. Oh, it is terribly fatiguing. I once heard a very clever man liken modern society to the mummy-room of the British Museum. He said, 'Human beings were so swathed and bound up in conven-

tionality that there was no getting at the real thing at all.'"

"I like Langley's way of knowing people," Cathy had answered; "she just knows them at once, takes it for granted, I mean, that all that interests her interests them. We had such an argument about it one day, when I would have it that she had bored some one about the soup-kitchen. 'I was so full of it myself that I knew that I should not talk so well on any other subject,' was her sole apology. And then she told me I was quite wrong, 'that people, after all, liked to be treated as reasonable beings, and not like children pleased with sugar-plums. "Give, and it shall be given you," was just as true in social intercourse as it was in the sense first intended. If you sow tares you will reap tares, child; always remember that,' she had finished. I prefer scattering precious grain. You have no idea how often one reaps a rich harvest. It is the real thing, you see, and people like that."

Queenie and Cathy were largely given to conversations such as these. It was just talking out their thoughts, as they called it. They aired all

manner of quaint subjects in this way, these two honest-hearted girls. Both were a little vague at times ; most women are. Cathy always amused her friend mightily. She had a habit at certain times, in her "goody moods," as she termed them, of taking herself to pieces to examine her moral mechanism, just as though she were examining the works of a new watch, as Queenie would tell her, clogging the wheels and stopping progress all the time. "If you are always taking yourself up by the roots to see how you grow you won't grow at all," she assured her in her droll way. "You ought not always to be looking at your defects and blemishes in the glass. People freckle from the sun sometimes ; but I don't believe over-much sunshine hurts any one. Keep tight hold of the reins, never let go, and then try and forget everything but the road you are travelling. Forget nothing but yourself ; mamma always said that."

There was something very fresh and sweet in this girlish intercourse, devoid as it was of vanity and selfishness ; they were tolerably equal in capacity ; neither could teach the other much,

but they could learn together. It was as though they were two young gleaners following the reapers : now one gathered a stray sheaf and tossed it into the lap of the other ; everything—an idea, a thought—was just a golden ear to be winnowed into grain. At times their content would have filled a granary.

Happy season of youth ! when everything is delightful because everything is new ; when harvests are more bountiful ; when the mildew and the blight and the canker-worm are unknown ; when the sky and earth meet and touch softly ; when beautiful thoughts steal like strange birds in the twilight ; when the glimmer of a star will provoke a reverie ; when a hand-clasp will wake a world of dreams ; when the whole universe is not too big a setting for one small beating heart ; when one believes in one's guardian angel, and heaven is so near—so near.

It is not always so. Alas ! alas ! for the anointed eyes purged from their youthful blindness, made wise with the serpent-knowledge of evil and good. Tread softly here, ye worldlings, with lifted sandals and bated breath ; for here, as in all real

lovely things fresh from the Maker's hand, is indeed holy ground.

Queenie was moderate in her praises of Hepshaw church ; nevertheless, it pleased her with a certain sense of fitness. There was no beauty of architecture, no tastefulness of detail ; it was just a village church, adapted to the needs of a rustic population.

But there was something grateful in its simplicity. Through the open door the fresh sweet winds blew straight from heaven ; the shadows of the sycamores swept without the porch ; some leaves rustled on the threshold. Queenie walked down the narrow aisle, turning over the well-worn books on the desks. A smile crossed her face when she saw the font ; the mean little stone stoup struck her as incongruous. "It seems a pity to see that," she said very simply, "I can almost cover it with the palm of my hand ; it ought to be so wide and massive, filled to the brim with purifying and regenerating water, lavishly given and lavishly bestowed, not doled in drops."

"Hush ! here comes Mr. Miles," answered

Cathy ; " he is the boys' schoolmaster. We have no schoolmistress, you know ; the old one is married and is going away with her husband. He has come to practise on the organ ; he is organist, choirmaster, and I don't know what besides."

" Is he nice ? " whispered Queenie. She just caught sight of the pale, serious-looking young man, dressed in shabby black like a Methodist parson of the old school, who came limping up the aisle on one crutch.

" Hum ! truth lies sometimes at the bottom of a deep well," was Cathy's ambiguous reply. " Yes, Garth says he is nice ; he pities him. Somehow I can't make him out ; I don't know why, but I always think of Eugene Aram, or the school-master in the ' Mutual Friend,' when I see him. I am sure he has got a history. I don't like a young man with a history ; from a child I never could bear riddles. Ted is quite fond of him, though. I believe half my dislike comes from his persisting in dressing like a broken-down undertaker ; he only wants a white tie to make him complete." They were happily in the lane

by this time, and Queenie could enjoy her laugh without scruple of conscience.

"Is this the vicarage, Cathy? but of course it is; I knew it from your description. You are a perfect word-painter; all your portraits are true to life."

"That means caricature."

"Well, I suppose so; but, all the same, your likenesses are thoroughly spirited."

"Only I never miss out the moles and the freckles. This is not the ideal vicarage, is it, *ma chère*? though I could show you one not many miles from here. Crossgill Vicarage is lovely; I must take you to see it some day, as nurse used to say; it is the dearest, most picturesque place. A little river flows through the village just in the middle of the road; and the church is beautiful; and the vicarage a quaint old house with gable ends embosomed in creepers, with the loveliest garden always blazing with flowers."

"That sounds nice."

"When we drive over there we have tea in the hall; it is wainscoted with oak, and there is a lattice window, and an old oak staircase and

gallery, all tiny, but so quaint, and the old nurse, nearly eighty, waits upon us ; I do love the place so."

"This is bare prose after that," returned Queenie, as they walked up the steep narrow garden, between rows of cabbages and bushes of pale pink and white roses. All sorts of homely old-fashioned flowers bloomed amongst the beans and peas and other vegetables, red and orange nasturtiums, tall spikes of lavender, blue larkspur, and masses of sweet mignonette. "No, not all bare prose," correcting herself and pointing to a bed of pansies, looking in the sunshine like a cluster of gold and violet butterflies poised on motionless velvet wings ; "there is a bit of floral painting for you ; there is a whole allegory in that."

"An allegory ! why, Queenie, you are actually becoming poetical. If Mr. Logan were here he would tell us that that is a species of violet—*Viola tricolor*—called also pansy."

"Believe me, there is a higher meaning in that still, butterfly life. Look at this one with glorious violet wings and just one golden eye ;

does it not look as though it ought to fly instead of remaining so humbly on its green stalk ? ”

“ Well, my ‘ Queen of Sheba,’ ” half impatiently and half amused, “ what do you make of that ? I am not a Solomon, to answer all your hard questions.”

“ I think,” returned Queenie, hesitating, “ that it means to teach us that the true heart’s-ease remains content in its own place ; it has wings, but they are not ready for flight, they just carry the dew and the sunshine, that is all. Brave little golden hearts, always radiant and smiling,” she continued, lightly brushing the bloom with her finger tip.

“ Mr. Logan ! ” ejaculated Cathy, elevating her eyebrows in a sort of comic despair, “ will you suggest some appropriate answer in return for this poetical dissertation,” and Queenie, blushing hotly, dropped the flowers and turned round.

“ My dear young lady, I am afraid I startled you,” said Mr. Logan benevolently ; “ but I did not like to play the eavesdropper any longer, though Miss Catherine was mischievous enough to try and keep me in the background. As it is,

I have stolen a very pretty fancy, which I know will delight Charlotte."

"Miss Marriott, Mr. Logan," returned Cathy, with much solemnity. "I know what a stickler you are for conventionalities and etiquette, Mr. Logan, and I could not suffer you to utter another sentence without due introduction."

"Is not that a slight deviation from the truth, my dear Miss Catherine, when you know, at least every one must know, my little failings in that respect? still I was not aware of your friend's name, and I dare say she was equally ignorant of mine."

"No, indeed," returned Queenie, trying to maintain her gravity. Cathy's eyes were dancing with fun, like a mischievous kitten; the wicked little creature knew how difficult it was for her friend not to laugh outright.

Mr. Logan certainly presented a curious appearance to a stranger's eyes. The good man was clad in a brown dressing-gown, patched neatly at the elbows with parti-coloured cloth, and his spectacles were pushed up his forehead, showing a pair of near-sighted blue eyes.

He was a tall spare man, with the plainest face, Queenie thought, she had ever seen, the features were so rugged and irregular; the spectacles and grey hair gave him an elderly appearance. Queenie heard afterwards that he was only in his fortieth year, and that Miss Cosie was quite ten years older.

The eyes were the only redeeming features. Either seen with or without the spectacles they were mild and yet keen; they could beam softly, as they did now at the two girls, with hearty benevolence, or dart searching glances that seemed to quiver like an arrow-point in the recesses of one's conscience. "They look through and through you," Cathy said once; "it is just like throwing a torch into a dark place, it brings all sorts of hidden things to light,—cobwebs and little foolishnesses, and odds and ends of rubbish."

"I like eyes that talk," was Queenie's answer to this. She liked Mr. Logan's face, in spite of its plainness; his voice too was so pleasant. She conceived a warm respect for the Vicar of Hepshaw on this first visit. In spite of his somewhat worn and homely appearance, the innate

dignity of the man made itself felt as he walked beside them in his old threadbare garment.

"Charlotte; where are you, Charlotte?" he exclaimed, raising his voice as they stood in what was termed the best sitting-room, a somewhat humble apartment with one small window.

"Here, Christopher, my dear," responded a small chirping voice from the inner recesses of the house, and a tiny woman tripped softly after it.

Miss Cosie! who could help giving her the name, she was so small and so compact, with such a comfortable pincushion-like compactness; a little grey mouse of a woman, with her grey dress, and grey Shetland shawl crossed over her shoulders, and the two large glossy curls pinned up on either side of the small head, which she was always patting with her little fat hands.

Why her very voice had a cosy sound in it. "My dear" seemed to drop perpetually out of it; it was a caressing, petting sort of voice, with a continual hush in it. "Hush! there, there, my dear," was her panacea for every one, from a crying child to a widowed virago. "There, there,

my dear, we can't have him back, but I dare say he is better off," or "there, there, my good man, go home to your poor wife," to a six-foot piece of drunken ruffianism she met staggering through the village and vociferating oaths in the darkness. "There, there, poor thing, he has lost himself, and is just daft; hush! we won't listen; the devil is schoolmaster to-night, and is teaching him a little bit of his own language."

Cosie! why the name was an inspiration; it fitted her to a nicety. Charlotte was simply a badinage, something for which her godmother was to blame, not she; no one but her brother would ever call her by such a term; it was almost crushing—but Miss Cosie!

Queenie called her by it at once, after the little woman had tripped up to her and lightly kissed her on the cheek, and then patted her with her white dimpled hand.

"There, there, my dear, I knew we should be friends; take off your bonnet and stay, and you shall taste my ginger wine."

This was always Miss Cosie's first speech to strangers. It was true no one ever wore bonnets

in Hepshaw ; but it was one of her ways to lament their disuse among the younger generation, as a falling-off of the good old times.

"Such fly-away, foolish things, my dear; now," as she would say, "a bonnet is so much more comfortable and becoming, and a pretty face looks so well in it. Shady! nonsense, my love, you can always wear an ugly if you are afraid of your complexion ; but bonnets were bonnets in those days, one did not carry a nosegay tied up in straw then."

Miss Cosie's one idea in life, next to petting people, was her brother. No one, in her opinion, could come up to him ; he was simply perfect.

"Such a mind, such a genius, and yet as simple as a child," she would exclaim. Her love and pride in him fairly bubbled over at times. Christopher, or Kit, as she sometimes called him, was the object of her sisterly idolatry. It was odd and yet touching to see her protecting tenderness ; perhaps her ten years' seniority had given the motherly element to her affections. "You see, Kit is still a boy to me," she would say sometimes ; "when he was a little fellow I used to

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put him to bed and sing him to sleep. I never can forget that somehow; and, dear me, my dear, he is still so helpless,—these clever men are, you know,—he never can remember even to put on a warm flannel or take a clean handkerchief out of his drawer; I just have to go in and put everything ready to his hand."

"Why, when the bishop came once," continued Miss Cosie, lifting her hands and eyes, "he was actually going to the station in that brown dressing-gown of his, if I had not run down the lane after him. Think what his lordship would have said at seeing one of his clergy dressed out in that ragged-robin fashion!"

"I have found out what flower Miss Cosie most resembles," said Queenie, when, after an hour's chat, they had left the vicarage. "Guess, Cathy."

"Little eyebright, I should say, or the ox-eyed daisy."

"No; the pansy of course. Cathy, how can you be so dense! why she looks and talks and breathes of nothing but heart's-ease."

## CHAPTER XIII.

## A VISIT TO ELDERBERRY LODGE.

“ Children, ay, forsooth,  
They bring their own love with them when they come,  
But if they come not there is peace and rest ;  
The pretty lambs ! and yet she cries for more :  
Why, the world’s full of them, and so is heaven—  
They are not rare.”—*Jean Ingelow.*

THE girls had lingered so long at the vicarage that Cathy postponed their intended walk until after luncheon; but as soon as it was over they sallied forth again, this time with Emmie.

They went through the length and breadth of the village, peeped into the schools, visited one or two of the cottages, crossing Langley more than once on their path ; and Queenie was again struck with the bright cheerfulness and cleanliness of the whole place. She took an especial fancy to the post-office—a pretty rustic-looking

cottage, with a long garden full of sweet old-fashioned flowers.

"Cathy, I have fallen in love with this place," she said at last. "I think life would go on peacefully and well here; look, Emmie, at this empty cottage; is not this just the one you always wanted to live in with Caleb?"

They had just passed the turning that led to Church-Stile House; beyond were a cluster of new-built villas. Emmie clapped her hands and ran breathlessly across the road.

"It has a board up 'to let.' Oh, Queen, do let us go over it, just for fun; it is such a dear, sweet little house; and what a long garden! —look."

"We can go in if you like," returned Cathy, smiling at the child's eagerness. "I know the woman who takes care of it; it is rather a pretty place, though ill-kept and desolate. I heard Garth say it would let for a mere song."

Queenie did not answer; a strange thought had been agitating her all the morning, a possibility and a probability that had taken tremendous hold of her mind. An odd feeling came over her

as she followed Cathy through the little gate—one of those weird over-shadowings or pre-visions that baffle metaphysicians. The place somehow seemed familiar to her; had she seen it in a dream? A dim sense that it belonged to her, that she had trodden that path before, and peeped through the lattice windows, oppressed her with a giddy unreality. Had she conjured it up among the shadows of the old garret? or had she seen a place so nearly approximate that its similarity deceived her? She gave Emmie's hand an involuntary squeeze as they stood in the little porch.

It was certainly a pretty place, in spite of the air of neglect and disuse that pervaded everything. A long narrow lawn in front ran down to the road; opposite was the smart grocer's shop, and the lane that led to the church and vicarage.

Some laburnums and lilacs grew near the house; there was a little border for flowers under the windows; only a ragged-looking Sweet-William and some weeds grew there now. Behind, an ill-kept lawn sloped down to the

house, running on to the back door, giving it a waste, barren look, and imparting an air of dampness to the whole place.

The inside was a little less dreary: the low lattice window, odd-shaped and diamond-paned, gave a picturesque finish to the rooms; the little square hall was pleasant. There were two sitting-rooms, one much smaller than the other, with a front view that was sufficiently cheerful; and a large bare-looking apartment, with two windows looking out on the steep green waste behind. Nettles and docks and festoons of coarse-looking ivy climbed about the window ledges. The kitchen was small and dull. Upstairs, three rooms in different stages of dampness opened out on the dark landing. Some of the paper was torn off, and hung in moist curling lengths. A scurry and patter of tiny feet sounded beside them; they were evidently tenanted by families of mice.

"It is a miserable place after all," observed Cathy. "Take care, one of those boards are rotten, Emmie; my foot nearly went through just now."

"I don't know," returned Queenie, hesitatingly, "I think I have taken a fancy to it; it might be made very pretty with fresh papers and a little paint. To whom does it belong?"

"To Captain Fawcett. We are going there directly; Langley has given me a message for Mrs. Fawcett. Oh! do come to the window a moment, Queen; there is Mrs. Morris stopping at the corner to speak to the three Miss Palmers. Look at the dear old creatures, dressed just alike. There you have all the aristocracy of Hepshaw, with the exception of Church-Stile House and the vicarage people."

"Do you mean that constitutes your society?" inquired Queenie, pressing closer to the dirty panes, and trying to inspect critically the flock of womanhood gathered round Greyson's smart window.

"What would you ask more?" returned her companion drily; "we don't have balls and concerts in Hepshaw. To dine with the Fawcetts and drink tea with Mrs. Morris and the Miss Palmers are our sole dissipation. Ted finds so much tea a little intoxicating, and prefers some-

times staying at home ; but Langley and Garth always do their duty manfully."

" I like the look of Mrs. Morris, she is tall and graceful-looking ; but I cannot see her face under that brown mushroom. Is she nice, Cath ? "

" Hum ! there are widows and widows. She is not the 'widow indeed' St. Paul talks about ; but I won't tell tales. She has a pretty home, and seven little hopes, more or less red-haired, like the deceased and ever-lamented Major Morris—the dear Edmund to whose loss she owes her present blighted and remarkably healthy existence."

" Cathy, how can you take off people so ! I tell you I like the look of her."

" So do I. She has white teeth and bright eyes, which she knows how to use. Do you see the direction they are taking now ? ' why tarry the wheels of his chariot ! ' Isn't that our waggonette coming up from Warstdale ? Never mind my nonsense, Queenie ; we must talk gossip sometimes in this dreary place. Mrs. Morris is very good-natured and very clever, and the seven little hopes are clean, wholesome children."

"Look ! your brother is stopping to speak to them."

"Of course ; as though he would pass the Palmers ! You have no idea how fond the dear old ladies are of him. They pet him, and knit endless mittens and comforters for him ; he has a drawer full, I believe. Look at them now, wagging their old heads and fluttering round him like a flock of grey pigeons ; that is Miss Faith, his favorite, near him now."

"Faith ; what a curious name !"

"Oh, they are all a cardinal virtue ; they must have had devout parents. The eldest is Hope, then comes Prudence and Charity, and lastly, Faith. Faith is much the nicest and the prettiest ; she is comparatively young too."

"I should like to go and see them."

"Then you shall, but not this afternoon ; we shall only have time for the Fawcetts. Their house is full of curious odds and ends, and though they dress alike they have separate rooms, which they have furnished after their own taste. I must coax them to let you see them ; it will give you an insight into their characters."

"And they have none of them married," exclaimed Queenie, with a girl's involuntary pity for the monotonous existence of single blessedness.

"How could they!" returned Cathy, with a puzzled elevation of her eyebrows. "They have lived in Hepshaw all their lives; they could not have possibly seen any gentleman except the Vicar, and I dare say he was married. You would not have a clergyman's daughter commit the unpardonable crime of entering into a *més-alliance* with the inn-keeper or the chemist!" continued Cathy, drawing down her lips at the corner, and speaking in a "prunes-and-prism" voice. "That is Miss Hope; and so the poor cardinal virtues have wasted all their sweetness on the desert air."

"How very sad," began Queenie; but Cathy suddenly cut her short.

"Not at all," was the somewhat stormy rejoinder; "people are just as well without marrying. For my part, I think men are a mistake. I am sick to death of school-girl rubbish; half the girls at Miss Titheridge's pretended

to be in love, and with such creatures too! any masculine face approaching to the ideal of a barber's block was pronounced handsome, fascinating. You know how you hated it all, Queenie."

"As I hate all sham."

"Faugh! the thought of all the three-volume trash I swallowed gives me moral dyspepsia even now. I recollect it was the fashion one term to have a *cœur serré*; every one had an experience or a disappointment. I know half the school was in love with Garth. Well, we have flattened our faces long enough against this bottle-green glass; now we must go on to Elderberry Lodge."

"Is that Captain Fawcett's?"

"Yes; Mrs. Morris's, next door, is the Sycamores, and the Miss Palmers' is the Evergreens. Now I have talked myself hoarse for your benefit; it is your ladyship's turn now. There is the Captain himself working in his front garden; is he not a fine-looking man, Queenie?"

Queenie acquiesced, as the tall soldierly figure walked down to the gate to greet them. She liked the brown weather-beaten face, with its grizzled moustache and closely-cropped head,

looking as though it were covered with grey bristles.

"Good afternoon, ladies. I saw Miss Clayton just now, and she told me you were coming. Fine weather for the crops; I was just pottering among my geraniums. Sit down, both of you, while I go into the house and find my little woman; she's palavering with the maids somewhere."

"Please don't hurry her, Captain Fawcett; we shall be very comfortable out here under this awning. Isn't this a delicious little garden? look at those roses and bee-hives. Bless you, the Captain's garden is his hobby; he spends the greater part of his time working here, and in his kitchen-garden. He has the greatest show of flowers for miles round."

"Have they no children?"

"They had one, a girl, but she died. I almost wish we had not brought Emmie; I think Alice was just twelve when she caught the fever. It is eight or nine years ago, but they have never got over it. Ah, there comes the Captain with his 'little woman.'"

Queenie stifled an exclamation as she rose from her seat. Mrs. Fawcett was as tall as her husband,—a thin, long-necked woman, fully six feet high, and gaunt almost to scagginess.

She had a worn, anxious-looking face ; it was difficult to imagine it had ever been young or good-looking. The prominent teeth, high cheek-bones, and scanty grey hair, told no tale of past beauty. It was a plain face, grown plainer with age. She looked like a caricature of her husband's taste beside his handsome old face and grand figure.

Her hand-shake was almost masculine in its grasp, and her voice was harsh, but not ungentle ; but both face and voice softened strangely at the first sight of Emmie. The husband and wife exchanged looks.

“Do you see, Captain ?”

“Aye, aye, missus, I see.”

“Is this your little sister, Miss Marriott ? Come to me, darling ; how old are you ?”

“Twelve,” repeated Emmie, looking up in her face with solemn blue eyes. Emmie rarely smiled with strangers.

"Twelve ; do you hear that, Joshua ?"

"Aye, aye, I hear it, little woman."

"Just her age," repeated the wife hurriedly, laying her hand on his arm, while her eyes filled with tears.

"Twelve years and three months," he repeated involuntarily.

"And she has Alice's blue eyes too,—your own color, Captain."

The girls had listened with silent sympathy to this brief interchange of sorrowful questioning ; but now Emmie interrupted them. She drew closer to Mrs. Fawcett, and laid a hand confidently on her lap.

"Was Alice the name of your little girl ? Cathy said you had one."

"Hush, Emmie ; come here to me, love ;" but Emmie hung back from her friend's extended hand.

"Yes ; her name was Alice ; she is still my little girl," returned the poor mother, speaking with her pure maternal faith, and unconsciously verifying the eternity of love ; "the treasure once given never really lost, only lent to safe keeping."

"Of course she is your little girl," was Emmie's answer. "You mean to see her again some day, only she is not keeping house with you now; perhaps she would have got tired. God would know all about that; He does not like children to be tired; He was very nearly taking me away for the same reason, only I got rested somehow."

"Captain, do you hear that?"

"Aye, poor bairn; too big a mind for so small a body."

"Am I like her?" persisted Emmie curiously, looking up into the plain face, now softened into motherly comeliness, the beautifier, love, smoothing out irregularities and roughnesses even on Mrs. Fawcett's unloving visage.

Queenie heard afterwards that she had never been handsome even in her youth, but that she had been loved, as some plain women are by men, with a constancy and devotion which many a spoiled beauty fails to win. "He must have seen the real goodness shining behind her plainness," Cathy said afterwards, when Queenie and she talked the matter over.

"Are you like her, darling?" answered Mrs.

Fawcett, mournfully. " You have her large blue eyes ; but, until she fell ill, she had rosy cheeks and long dark curls. She was the very image of her father, the dear angel."

" My hair has been cut off," returned Emmie, pointing to the soft little rings just peeping under her cap ; " it means to curl too some day. I have always longed for curls ; so the angels always have them in pictures."

" Come with me, my little maid, and look at my roses," interrupted the Captain, reading his wife's troubled countenance aright. The tears streamed over the thin face as Emmie trotted happily away with him.

" That is just the way they walked hand in hand every morning to look at the roses," sobbed the poor mother. "' Father's roses ' were the last words Alice ever said ; ' I should like one of father's roses ' ; and when he went out to pick her one she put her head down on my shoulder and then she was gone."

Queenie's long eye-lashes glittered with sympathizing tears. She could enter into all ; she had so nearly lost Emmie. She thought of the father

going down to his garden to pick red and white roses for the little dead hand that could not open to receive them. "My beloved is gone down into his garden to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies": those beautiful words of the Canticles came into her mind. What if in Paradise, while parents wept below for them that are not, the children they had lost went in bright bands after One who died for them, "when He went down into His garden to gather lilies!"

The girls were rather subdued when they bade good-bye to the good Captain and his wife, and turned into the little lane. Cathy pushed her hat restlessly from her forehead; some thought or discontent wrinkled it.

"What lots of good people there are in the world after all," she half grumbled.

"There are two there," returned her friend, with a gesture of her hands towards Elderberry Lodge. "My visit there has made me sad, and yet it has done me good. I am so glad we went, Cathy."

"Good people seem to agree with you; they never make you discontented, as they do me."

"No; I like standing on tiptoe till my neck

aches. I love size, bigness, grand moral structure ; it does one good to breathe the same air with some people ; it is like resting on a hill-top and enjoying a wide beautiful view. I don't mind at all being a pygmy among giants. If I had been Gulliver I should have had small sympathy with the Lilliputians. Littleness of mind is abhorrent to me."

"There you go," grumbled Cathy ; "you sensible people are enough to drive one crazy. Over-much goodness makes me vixenish ; I feel inclined to fly in the face of it."

"You foolish child."

"Mr. Logan is often too much for me, and so is Miss Cosie ; I run away from them both sometimes. I'll own, if you like, the disease is infectious to those predisposed to it. If you stay long enough in their vicinity you might catch it, you know. Prevention is better than cure ; so, for fear I get too good, I just run away," finished Cathy in her droll manner.

In the front court they came upon Garth digging up a little flower-border under the hall window. He threw down his spade when he saw them.

" Well, I've settled about the picnic in the granite quarry. We go to-morrow."

" Garth, you are a brick ; I mean a dear old fellow. Oh," folding her hands pathetically, " don't tell of me, the word only slipped out just by accident. Have you really arranged it ? "

" Yes ; I have had a talk with Langley. She says we must not lose the fine weather. It is not to be a grand affair, mind. Only the Logans, and Fawcetts, and Miss Faith ; yes, and Harry Chester."

" King Karl ! Oh, I am so glad. Why, when did you see him ? "

" He and Nanette are in there," pointing to the drawing-room. " Don't let me keep you if you want to introduce him to Miss Marriott," as Cathy looked eager and irresolute. " He is a very old friend of ours, and a great favorite with the whole family," he continued, speaking to Queenie ; " in fact, Harry is a favorite with every one."

" Let her judge for herself," returned his sister impatiently. " Come, Queenie, let us go in ; I have set my heart on being the first to introduce you to the King of Karldale."

## CHAPTER XIV.

## IN THE GRANITE QUARRY.

“ But still she found, or rather thought she found,  
Her own worth wanting, others to abound ;  
Ascribed above their due to every one,  
Unjust and scanty to herself alone.”—*Dryden*.

“ QUEEN, this is our old friend Mr. Chester, commonly known in the district as the King of Karldale ; he plays Damon to Garth’s Pythias, and is a sort of useful Family Friend to us all.”

Cathy’s entrance as usual effected a sort of whirlwind ; her swift movements and flowing draperies swept breezelike through the quiet room. Langley’s low-toned “ hush ” was no check on her volubility. A look of amusement crossed Mr. Chester’s face as he stood up and greeted the new-comers.

“ Irrepressible as usual, Cathy,” was his only comment, as he reseated himself beside Langley,

and took up his little daughter, a solemn-faced child of four, on his knee.

Queenie regarded the pair critically. On the whole the survey contented her.

The King of Karldale was a tall, powerfully-built man, with a florid handsome face, half hidden by a light curly beard, a countenance marked more by good nature than intellect, but bearing the stamp of plain honest common-sense.

Queenie wondered if it were her fancy, that a vague uneasiness pervaded the man's gait at times. In spite of his cheerfulness and hearty laugh there were hints of past or present troubles in the worn lines round the kindly eyes; even in the midst of their pleasant talk a shadow now and then crossed his face, as though some unwelcome remembrance obtruded itself.

Strange to say, there was little or no resemblance between the child and him.

Nan was evidently a character.

She sat perched on her father's knee in her little white pelisse and sun-bonnet, with a large woolly lamb in her arms, staring at Queenie with great dark eyes.

Queenie noticed that now and then one small hand would furtively touch her father's coat-sleeve, and she would stroke the rough grey tweed with a look of infinite contentment, but showed no impatience or weariness during the long discussion that followed the girls' entrance.

"Is my little mouse tired? is not Nan very tired?" said Mr. Chester, at last stooping to peep under the sun-bonnet.

Queenie caught the look, and then she said to herself, "That little bright-eyed child is his idol."

"Nan is not so very tired, father," pronounced the little creature with a slight lisp, and a stress on the word, very; "a little, only a very little."

"Then we will go, my pet; say good-bye to Langley," and Nan obediently slid down from her father's knee, and trotted with sturdy compactness across the room.

Queenie stood with the sisters in the porch and watched them cross the tiny moat under the dark sycamores, Nan wrapt up in a grey rug, and seated comfortably in her little chair-saddle on the back of an old white pony, her white lamb still hugged in her arms, her

father holding the reins, and mounted on a handsome brown mare. "Nan has found her voice now; do you hear how she is chattering to him, Langley?" observed Cathy in an amused voice. "How those two dote on each other! No wonder Gertrude is jealous, the child cares nothing for her mother; but then Gertrude is too selfish to make a fuss over any one but herself."

"Hush, my dear; what a terribly sweeping assertion! Gertrude is an undemonstrative woman, one cannot tell how deeply she feels."

"And Harry is a demonstrative man, and ought to have a wife who understands and makes much of him, instead of one who frets and teases him from morning to night. It is no good talking to me," continued Cathy, with a burst of vindictiveness rather surprising from its suddenness, "I detest that woman, with her slim figure and dark eyes, and little would-be elegancies. She to be Harry's wife and the mother of Nan! Why I would not trust a pet dog to her tender mercies and small tempers."

"Cathy, all this is highly unnecessary," remonstrated her sister in a pained tone. Her

face looked a little paler and sadder as she went back into the house after uttering her little protest. A child's white woollen glove lay on the carpet beside a stray sunbeam. Queenie, following her, saw as she stooped to pick it up that she touched it lightly with her lips before laying it aside in her work-basket.

The next day was warm and bright, "regular Queen's weather," as Cathy chose to call it; and at the time appointed a merry little party assembled at the door of the Deer-hound, and filled the two little waggonettes.

Garth had gone over to the Quarry, and left his brother as his deputy, and a playful dispute ensued between him and Captain Fawcett concerning the selection of the occupants of each waggonette. "The difficulty of suiting folk was truly awful," as Ted expressed it feelingly.

Captain Fawcett had secured Langley and Miss Faith Palmer, and his wife and Miss Cosie had tucked in Emmie between them, just as Ted had slyly beckoned to the girls to favor him.

Mr. Logan and Mr. Chester had followed,

and Nan was carefully lifted in and placed beside her father.

"Do you mean to say that mite of a child is going with us to the Quarry?" interposed Mrs. Fawcett, in genuine dismay. "What can her mother be thinking about?"

"Hush! her father takes her everywhere with him," replied Langley softly; "she is out with him all day on the farm; she is never tired. I know he has often carried her for miles, or walked beside her pony."

"Dear, dear! what a mistake," ejaculated Miss Cosie, straightening her brown "ugly," in the depths of which the gentle little mouse face was almost buried from view, and trying to pat the big curls. "A child of that tender age ought to be with her mother. It reminds one of the child in Kings—or was it in Samuel?—who got sun-stroke, or something of the kind, and cried, 'My head, my head,' and they carried him to his mother. Think if something of that kind happened to that dear child! her father would never forgive himself; but there, there, he does it for the best, poor dear."

"The child frets after him, and is never happy away from him," replied Langley in a low voice, for Mrs. Fawcett's eyes had filled with tears, and she had taken Emmie's hand in hers. "Mrs. Chester is a nervous invalid; and one cannot judge in these cases," finished Langley in a deprecating voice.

"True, my dear, true; but I am such an advocate of mother's right, as I often tell Kit; there is something so especially sacred in the claims of maternity. Bless you, I know all about their feelings as much as if I had a dozen children," continued the little woman, brightly. "Didn't I have a dear old mother myself, and Kit her very image, poor soul; and didn't she often say, 'Charlotte, my dear, you will know one day, please God, what a mother's feelings are'? And so I do, my dear; and so does every woman, married and single," finished Miss Cosie with a little burst, "as long as there are young things in the world needing our care."

"You are right," returned Langley in a stifled voice; and just then the other waggonette passed, Ted cracking his whip and gesticulating boyishly.

Nan was on her father's knee as usual, the little white sun-bonnet rested on his shoulder, the quiet dark eyes and rosy face full of a child's contentment.

Garth received his guests at the entrance to the works, and did the honors of the place with great dignity. "Is not the dear old fellow just in his element," whispered Ted to Cathy, as they stood behind the others. Queenie caught the whisper and smiled to herself.

"He looks just what he is, a ruler among men; one who ought to be a leader, who expects obedience as a right," she thought, as she watched the tall athletic figure moving through the sheds crowded with workmen. "The old grey coat and felt hat just suited him," she thought. Though he carried his head so high he had a pleasant word or look for the men.

"My fellows are such splendid workmen," he said once, with a little conscious pride in his manner. The words, "My men," "my boys," were perpetually on his lips. Here, on his own domain, among his subjects, he felt and moved as a sort of king. "Rival monarchs, my dear,"

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observed Cathy mischievously—" King Karl and the King of Warstdale."

To Queenie the whole scene was strangely picturesque—the blue sky ; the open sheds full of noisy workers ; the whirr of machinery ; the great blocks of rough-hewn granite, grey, fresh from the quarries ; then the smooth polished slabs, shining with soft-mingled tints. The process, the amount of hard, patient labour, astonished the girl. She could have stood for a long time watching the masons chiselling and fine-boring the hard stone. Piles of grey and pink granite lay in the centre, carved and shaped into headstones.

Mr. Logan inspected them thoughtfully.

" White marble is more beautiful, especially for the graves of women and children," she heard him say to Captain Fawcett ; " but then granite is more impervious to weather. In cemeteries, for instance, where there are trees the constant dropping and damp stains and defaces the beauty of the marble ; but nothing spoils the granite."

" Nothing, to my mind, beats Warstdale granite," replied the Captain meditatively.

"Marble is too white and chilly for our English cemeteries; we want Italian sun to light it up. Look at these warm tints; here is coloring, durability, everything we want. Can anything be finer than this polish?"

Queenie was listening to them with interest when Garth came up and claimed her attention.

"While they are getting the quarry engine ready I want to show you the workmen's cottages, and the room where Langley and I have our classes," said the young man a little condescendingly. He looked grey-eyed, eager, rather flushed with playing the part of host and cicerone to so many ladies. His white teeth gleamed with a bright happy smile under his dark moustache; but for all that his tone had a slight accent of condescension that made Queenie smile as she followed him.

"You are master here—Garth Clayton of Warstdale—and I am a poor little school-teacher, a nobody," thought the girl, with just a faint touch of rebellion, growing hot all at once.

"Stay, this is rough walking; let me give you some help," and he turned back and held out

his hand. For a moment Queenie hesitated ; it was her nature to be independent, and walk alone. She never willingly owned to any small feminine weakness. "If she fell she could pick herself up," she always said ; but a glance at the kind bright face changed her resolution. She took the offered hand without any demur, and let herself be guided through the intricacies of the path as meekly as Nan, who followed them, holding tightly to her father's sleeve. She stood quietly beside him, an appreciative and most sympathizing listener, as he explained, with not unpardonable egotism, all his little schemes and plans for the comfort of his workmen. "My boys deserve all that I can do for them, they are such good fellows, and clever, too, some of them. "Why, there is Daniel Armstrong ;" and here followed a string of anecdotes bearing on the cleverness of this man, the gratitude and good feeling of another, the sad troubles of a third, until Ted came down on them in a whirlwind of indignation, to know what Garth meant by keeping them all waiting ?

"All right, Ted ; go on with Miss Marriott,"

returned his brother good-humoredly, breaking in upon the lad's wrath. "I am going to carry Nan ;" and, as the little lady looked dubious, and clung close to her father, he caught her up and seated her lightly on his shoulder and marched off with her, a smile breaking over Nan's face as her father clapped his hands after her.

The little engine was already waiting for them ; and the trucks were furnished with boxes and hampers, which formed seats for the ladies. Emmie crept up to her sister to whisper her ecstasies. "She had never been so happy in her life ; everyone was so good to her, that kind Mrs. Fawcett especially ; and Miss Cosie and Miss Faith Palmer ; she was sure she would love Miss Faith dearly ; and did not Queenie think she was very pretty ?"

"She certainly had been," Queenie thought, "though no longer young." It was a very sweet, loveable face still, though with a certain sadness of repression on it—the shadowing of an over-quiet life. Coloring would still have lent it beauty ; but, as it was, the pallid neutral tints

harmonized with the grey Quaker-like costume and little close bonnet. The voice was very sweet, but lacked enthusiasm ; it touched one like some plaintive minor chord ; it was the face and voice that one meets behind the gratings of nunneries, or in the hushed wards of a hospital, where youth finds no place, and the bustle of life is shut out.

She placed herself by Queenie as the engine steamed off, somewhat slowly, and the work-sheds receded from their view.

“ You must come and see my sisters. One of them, Charity, is an invalid, and the sight of a fresh face is such a treat to her. Her world is bounded by four walls, and she lives in her books. She knows far more about it than I do, who was never a reader,” said the quiet woman with a little sigh.

. Queenie fell in love with Miss Faith on the spot, as she told Cathy afterwards. Young as she was, she knew far more of the world than this woman of thirty-five. The unsophisticated freshness of the simple woman, her tender voice, her old-fashioned ways, and little quaint pedant-

eries, charmed the young governess, grown bitter with the hard edge of life. Before the day was out she learnt a good deal about "the Sisterhood," as Garth and Cathy always called the Evergreens, where the Palmers lived. The eldest sister, Hope, was cosmopolitan in her charities,—knitted woollen jugs and socks for the missionary boxes of half the neighbourhood, was a strong advocate of the temperance movement, and was a little shaky in her church principles, having, as her sisters well knew, a decided leaning to the society of the Plymouth Sisters.

The second sister, Prudence, managed the household, and divided her time between her store-room and her district. "I am not as clever as the others ; but I wait on Charity," said Miss Faith, with an unconscious pathos in her voice.

"'Faith waiting on Charity.' Poor cardinal virtues," thought the girl, with a little smile of amusement over the odd play of words. I suppose Faith has plenty of waiting and looking up in this world. To judge by some women's lives, some must wait for ever," soliloquized the young philosopher with a sigh.

She speculated for a short time on this Charity, who had been handsomer than any of them, and had met with an accident in her youth, whose view was bounded by four walls, and who lived in her books.

"My dear Miss Marriott, Cara is so clever. You should hear her talk. She and Mr. Logan have such interesting conversation ; it is quite wonderful to hear them. What a blessing it is to have a well-stored mind ; no empty space for discontent to creep in, as Cara says. I often wish I were clever," continued the simple woman, "and then one would not need to perplex one's self so about the meanings of things. Life never seems such a puzzle to Cara as it does to me."

But here Cathy, who had overheard the last sentences, interrupted her scornfully.

"Do you call it life ?" curling her lip scornfully. "Are such meagre existences really life ? Life pre-supposes movement, animation, sensation, coloring, plenty of work, but above all, movement ; not sitting in a close room, putting in patches and listening to chapters of Physical Geography. Every one knows you are a saint,

Miss Faith," continued Cathy, enthusiastically. "I know Garth thinks so. But, all the same, life means a little more than patches and dissertations on the Gulf Stream."

" You young things are so impetuous," returned poor Miss Faith with a tremulous smile ; " perhaps at your age one may have felt the same. There is a sort of fever in young blood, I think. I remember how we used to feel in the spring-time ; it made one's pulses beat faster only to hear the birds singing in their little new nests."

" You thought of something else besides patching then," persisted Cathy, rebelliously.

" My dear, I love sewing ; and then what else can one do when one is not clever. I used to wish I could find work in some children's hospital ; nursing is my forte, you know. I think I could have been quite happy if I had some young creatures round me. I tried for a little while, you remember ; and then Cara wanted me, and I came home."

" And I have never forgiven Cara to this day," was the angry response. " You looked like a different woman when you came home from

Carlisle, Miss Faith,—years younger and brighter, and—”

“ Hush, my dear, hush ! I am not very clever, but I have learned one thing,—never to leave a certain duty for an uncertain one. It is a safe rule ; you will find it so, Cathy. I often think of my children, and long to be back with them ; but nothing would induce me to leave Cara while she wants me.”

There was a slight lull in the conversation, and Miss Faith’s voice dropped to a whisper. A fresh wind blew over the wide moor. Some black-faced mountain sheep browsed among the heather ; one of them had strayed on to the line, and the little engine slackened speed. The wild, somewhat barren scenery, the novel mode of traffic, the sweet moorland air, charmed and exhilarated Queenie ; she squeezed Emmie’s hand as she whispered to her, “ Don’t you love Miss Faith ? ” “ Faith waiting on Charity,” she said to herself with a little sigh.

The quarry was in sight by this time. Trucks of the blasted stones were being shunted hither and thither ; then came the work-sheds and

ponderous machinery. Queenie followed the others, as Garth led them from one point to another. She listened as breathlessly as Emmie to his description of the blasting ; she tried to imagine the vast report echoing over those lonely moors, the terrified sheep huddled far away in heaps, the masses of fallen rocks, and then started a little as she found Garth looking down at her with earnest eyes.

" All this is new to you, a fresh experience. You have not hewn lessons out of rocks all your life long, as I have," observed the young man sententiously.

" No," she answered a little timidly ; " but then I am only a governess."

" That means a bookworm. Are you very learned, Miss Marriott ? I wonder you have not frightened Langley. Rocks and men have been my books," continued Garth, waving his hand at the rough cliff half torn down, but wearing graceful fronds of ferns in its crevices. " There are hard durable lessons to be learnt here : how to overcome difficulties, how to war with opposition. I would rather be here among my quarry-

men than on the benches of the House of Commons."

Queenie gave a swift upward glance, but did not answer. "A king among men," she was saying to herself softly.

"You cannot think how I pity business men in cities," Garth went on, as he walked beside her. "Boys fresh from school chained for the best part of their lives to the desk; cramped up in a close atmosphere, bringing all their best energies, their choicest talents, down to the level of dull routine,—money-getting, money-loving,—narrowed to a perfect machinery of existence."

"I think you are a little unjust and prejudiced there," replied Queenie, with some spirit; "you may love your life best, and I dare say you are right. You have freedom and rule, two very good things."

"And plenty of fresh air," put in Garth, baring his head as he spoke to the sweet moorland wind that met them.

"Yes, and that too. But these men are to be honored, because they make the best of their

life. Many of them do not like it ; a few rebel ; others get cramped and narrowed, as you say. But to do one's work in the world, and to do it worthily,—how distasteful and full of drudgery and routine as it may be,—is to be a man in the truest sense of the word," finished Queenie, with a sudden sparkle in her brown eyes.

"Very properly put. Do you think I do not agree with you ? I am only comparing my lot with others, a little to their disparagement. There is Ted, there, that brother of mine,—would you believe it, Miss Marriott !—I think you must take him in hand, and preach contentment,—he vows this place is a howling desert ; no society ; not a thing to do. It must be owned," continued Garth, candidly, "that for a fellow without resources Hepshaw may be a trifle dull, especially in the winter."

"Do you never find it so, Mr. Clayton ?" asked Queenie, with a little natural surprise. It still seemed strange to her that this man, so young and distinguished-looking, should own himself contented with a position where he had few equals and no superiors.

"Dull! do you mean to compare me to Ted, who is lazy, and has no resources?" returned the young man, slightly discomfited. "What is there that my life lacks? I have a good home, sisters, a plague of a brother. It is my own fault, I suppose, if I have no closer ties," continued Garth, with a little laugh, and coloring slightly; "but there is plenty of time for that. I have more work than I know how to do; and then there is cricket and foot-ball; and lectures and the chess-club for winter's evening. I sometimes wish my days were double their length. That does not look like dulness," finished Garth, in a chafed tone, as though something in her words had offended him.

Queenie held her ground a little obstinately; she was on the brink of a discovery. What was the one jarring element in this honest sweet nature? Was it pride? or—

"You may have all this, and yet you may miss a great deal of what your despised city men call life," she went on, with an old-fashioned sagacity that surprised the young man, who was simple enough in his way. "You miss contact

with other minds. Here you can have no opportunity of gleaning new ideas. There must be a certain amount of stagnation here. Cathy knows what I mean ; she and I have often talked of it." She finished with slight abruptness, somewhat provoked by the incredulous smile that rose to his lips.

"Stagnation here!" How Queenie wished he would not repeat her words. "You are hard on us and Hepshaw. Of course we are simple country folk ; we do not aspire to be anything else ; but a peaceful and independent existence does not necessarily mean stagnation."

"Mr. Clayton, why will you persist in misunderstanding me?" returned Queenie, in a vexed voice. They were standing at the extreme edge of a jutting piece of rock ; the others had turned back, and were watching some machinery at work ; below them lay the wide moor. Some peewits were flitting hither and thither ; a bank of white clouds sailed slowly away westward. "I am not hard on Hepshaw ; I feel already that I love it dearly. I only thought that you, being a man, must sometimes long for a little more society."

"Because I am like Ted, and have no resources, I suppose?" but this time there was a mollified gleam in his eyes. "I think I am one of the quiet sort; a few friends content me. Mr. Logan is a host in himself, with sufficient information to stock half-a-dozen ordinary men, not to mention Captain Fawcett, who has travelled and seen the world; and then we have Harry Chester at Karldale, and Mr. Ray, the Vicar of Karlsmere, and the Sowerbys of Blandale Grange,—very sensible good people,—and the Cunninghams, Dora and her father at Crossgill Vicarage. My sisters must take you over there, Miss Marriott. One can have friends enough for the asking," continued Garth, loftily. "I always disliked crowds of acquaintances; I am not like Ted."

Queenie gave him an understanding glance, but her closed lips offered no response. The shrewd little observer of human nature was saying to herself, "I have found you out, Mr. Clayton; you are good, but you are not perfect. Cathy is right. It is better, so you think, to be the leading man in Hepshaw, and king in Warst-

dale, than to be simply Mr. Clayton in London or Carlisle ; to lord it over inferior minds than to mix with superior intelligences ;” and, as she recognized this trait, something like a pang of disappointment crossed her mind.

Was he not a sort of hero to her ? and ought not heroes to be perfect ?

“ It strikes me that I have been very egotistical, and that you must be very tired,” he said at last, rousing her from her reverie, and turning his bright face full on her with such a kindly look that her brief disdain died from that moment. “ Let us come and see how Ted has managed the luncheon ; he always acts as my steward on these occasions.”

“ I wonder who Dora is,” thought Queenie, as they walked leisurely back behind some laden trucks. “ I wonder if Cathy has ever mentioned her. Dora Cunningham and her father at Crossgill Vicarage ! ”

## CHAPTER XV.

## QUEENIE'S COUNSELLOR.

“Thou cam’st not to thy place by accident,—  
It is the very place God meant for thee ;  
And should’st thou there small scope for action see  
Do not for this give room to discontent.”—*Trench.*

TED had proved himself an able steward, and a sufficiently luxurious luncheon had been conjured up for their refreshment.

Queenie had never in her life been present at a stranger picnic,—a table had been set at the base of a jutting cliff, and boxes and emptied hampers formed rude seats for the party. The brothers presided, and Ted’s boyish face beamed with innocent satisfaction at the result of his successful management. “Isn’t this first-rate,” he whispered to Queenie who sat beside him. “Not a drop of rain to spoil enjoyment, and only enough wind to blow the table-cloth off once.

We broke one bottle of cream, but that's nothing ; you must have some champagne. Garth always does things handsomely for the ladies. Miss Cosie," persuasively, "you will have just half a glass to drink Garth's health ?"

" My dear, not a drop ; what an idea, and I a total abstainer !" and Miss Cosie's big curls quite shook with excitement. " I wish you and your dear brother would think with me on this subject. If only more of his men would sign the pledge ; fancy Hepshaw without a single public-house ! why it would be paradise over again," continued the little woman, patting his coat-sleeve in her energy ; " but there, there, my dear, we can't expect old heads on young shoulders."

After luncheon the party broke up into twos and threes. Garth had half-an-hour's business to transact ; Ted volunteered to help Miss Faith and Cathy in their search for ferns ; Langley and Miss Cosie superintended the repacking of hampers ; while Captain Fawcett strolled with Mr. Chester across the moor, leaving his wife in delighted guard over the two children. Queenie had declined to join in the fern scramble, and

she and Mr. Logan seated themselves on some granite boulders; there Garth found them on his return. More than an hour had elapsed, the rest of the party had disappeared. Nan and Emmie were playing at fortifications among the rocks. A merry voice from the cliff above called to Mr. Logan; he pushed his spectacles off his forehead in a perplexed way as he rose slowly in obedience to the summons.

"You and I will talk about this again, my dear young lady, we have plenty of time; nothing need be settled in a hurry. I confess you have taken me somewhat by surprise, but I will promise you that I will think well over it, and let you know."

"What are you and the Vicar prosing about?" asked Garth with good-humored curiosity, as he threw himself down on an old shepherd's plaid beside her, and stretched himself luxuriously. "Has the dear old pedant been treating you to the results of some of his antiquarian researches? You look tired and grave, Miss Marriott."

"Because I am discussing a grave subject," she returned, rather nervously, pulling at some

grasses that grew between the stones, and splitting the thin stalks of the weeds as she spoke. "I was asking Mr. Logan's advice about something; most likely he will speak to you; at least he said he recommended me to speak myself," faltered Queenie, growing pale all at once with the difficulty of imparting her plans to a stranger.

"You are in some uncertainty; you want advice, assistance, and you do not like to trust such new acquaintances," he replied quietly, with such thorough comprehension of her unusual diffidence, and with such evident intention of breaking through it, that Queenie's uncomfortable timidity yielded a little.

"I am only a stranger among you, and I have no right to trouble you with my affairs; only Mr. Logan said—" but he interrupted her with good-humored peremptoriness.

"You shall tell me by-and-bye what Mr. Logan said. Let us settle this little piece of business first. I like to be troubled with other people's affairs, it is a hobby of mine, and makes me feel of more consequence;" and then, a little

gravely, "I do not look upon my sister's intimate friends as strangers."

" You are very kind," hesitating.

" We mean to be, if you will allow us such a privilege, Miss Marriott. I hope you mean to tell us how we can be of service to you and your little sister. You want advice, you say ? I am not as clever as Mr. Logan ; but then, every one knows business men are more practical than the clergy. Supposing you tell me all about it, your plan and everything," finished Garth, in a comfortable, matter-of-fact tone, as he stretched himself again on the shepherd's plaid, but at the same time he shot a keen anxious glance at the young face above him ; and, indeed, the sadness in Queenie's brown eyes might have touched a harder heart than Garth's.

" There is little to say," she replied, with a quick flush. It was one thing telling her troubles to Mr. Logan, who was kind and fatherly, and who looked about fifty, whatever his age might be ; but to tell them to this young man, who spoke to her with such pleasant peremptoriness, who was at once gentle and yet masterful, who

never let her forget for a moment that he was Garth Clayton of Warstdale, well, it was different. And yet he might be able to help her and Emmie.

"Oh, it is so painful to have to trouble you with such things," she said with a little impatience and quiver of suppressed annoyance in her voice; "that is the worst of being a woman, that one must be helpless, and trouble people."

"I rather enjoy this sort of trouble," he replied coolly; "I like to be of use, and to give advice. We are only wasting time, and the others will be back. Supposing you tell me all about it," continued Garth, with a bright persuasive smile, quite comprehending her difficulty, but making light of it in his masculine way. "I am years younger than the Vicar, but you will find that we business men are just as much to be trusted."

"Yes; I know. I think men have the best of it in everything," continued poor Queenie, ashamed of her irritation, and yet conscious of feeling it all the time. "They are independent, they can carve out their own lot in life; it is women only who are so helpless. After all, there

is little to tell. I am not ashamed of being poor ; I never was in my life. I want to work for myself and Emmie, and I think I have found something that will suit me in Hepshaw."

"In Hepshaw!" Garth raised himself on his elbow, and gazed at her in unfeigned astonishment.

"Yes ; it is humble, but I know it will suit me ; and then Emmie will have country air, and we shall not be separated. You look surprised, Mr. Clayton ; surely you guess what I mean ! Cathy tells me that you are going to lose your girls' school-mistress, and I want Mr. Logan to elect me in her stead."

"And what did he say ?" asked Garth in a tone of such utter bewilderment that Queenie nearly laughed.

"He seemed almost as astonished as you are, and tried by every means in his power to dissuade me. He said it was absurd to throw away myself and my talents on a village school, that—"

"He was right, of course," returned Garth, interrupting her ; "we must do better for you

than this, Miss Marriott ; the scheme cannot be entertained for a moment. Why our school-mistress has only forty pounds a-year ! We might make it fifty, perhaps ; but for a lady—He is right ; it is too absurd."

"Hush ! please do not make up your mind that it is impossible. I have set my heart upon this, ever since I came ; and Cathy told me the school-mistress was gone. I want it for Emmie's sake, because she must have country air, and we cannot be separated. We would rather starve on a crust together than be separated," continued Queenie, speaking with feverish energy, and the tears springing to her eyes.

"But, Miss Marriott—"

"But, Mr. Clayton, you must listen to me, please. I have no such grand prospects before me ; a junior teacher in a school cannot command a high salary. If I went back to Carlisle it would only be drudgery over again, with no Emmie. No ; you must hear me," silencing him as he attempted to speak : "this is a wiser plan than you think. I have forty pounds a-year of my own, it is nothing very great, but it all

helps ; and then I might give French lessons to Mrs. Morris's children in the evening. Cathy says Mrs. Morris is so anxious for them to have lessons ; she and I were awake half the night planning it, and Cathy said—”

“ Well, what did she say ? ” as Queenie paused.

“ That I must speak to you and Mr. Logan, and that you would be sure to help me. There is that little cottage of Captain Fawcett's to be let ; we were looking at it yesterday. Do you think it would be very dear ? ” asked Queenie anxiously. “ It would do so nicely for Emmie and me, if the rent were not too high.”

“ Do you mean that ramshackle wilderness of a cottage just fronting the lane ? ”

“ Yes ; it would be very pretty if it were only freshened up a little, and the garden put in order.”

“ Well, it might not be so bad,” returned Garth reluctantly. “ Rents are not very high here ; I dare say Fawcett would let you have it for about fifteen pounds a-year, and do it up properly besides. Let me see, there was some furniture belonging to it, that will go for a mere song.”

"I forgot about the furniture," owned Queenie candidly. "We must be content with very little at first, just a table and a few chairs or so. I have only a few pounds to spare, but Caleb would advance me the rest. Fifteen pounds a-year! do you really think that Captain Fawcett will let the cottage to us for that?"

"I can answer for it, certainly he will. You can leave that part to me; you need not distress yourself about that little matter of detail; as far as that goes I can promise to secure your election to-morrow. All I want to know is, if you be serious in this matter?"

"Mr. Clayton, how can you ask me such a question?"

"I call it a monstrous notion."

"Then we will not argue about it at all."

"Impracticable and absurd to the last degree. Good heavens, Miss Marriott!" flinging back his head with a gesture of mingled excitement and wrath, "have you no friend or relative to stand by you, and prevent you from throwing yourself away on this miserable pittance?"

"I have one very good friend, but he is poor,"

returned the girl, and then she sighed. Something in Garth's manner—his assumed roughness, his suppressed wrath, the sudden break and softening of his voice as he uttered his short remonstrance—touched and yet pained her. What would it be to have a brother to work for her when she needed support, a strong arm that could protect her in times of emergency !

Poor self-reliant Queenie felt her bravery oozing out. Suddenly a pang of self-pity crossed her as she pictured the future. Would it always be work and drudgery for herself and Emmie ? must she for ever go through life with this weak burthen round her neck, toiling, toiling, with the child's feeble hand in hers ?

" Friends will not be wanting to us ; heaven helps those who help themselves," she cried with a clasp of her hands and another involuntary sigh. " I am not afraid—not often, I mean. I prayed for work ; and now work has come, and I do not mean to shrink from it. I hope you and your sisters will not be ashamed of knowing me when I am only a village school-mistress. Are you sure you will not mind — for your

sisters, I mean ? ” turning on him a little anxiously.

“ Do you think such a question deserves an answer ? ” somewhat reproachfully. “ You do not know us yet, Miss Marriott. We shall honor you more in your poverty and independence than if you came amongst us rolling in riches. Rich people are my abhorrence, women especially. Agar’s prayer—‘ Give me neither poverty nor wealth ’—always pleased me. I am an odd fellow, and have my hobbies and facts like other men—this is one of them.”

“ It is a very comfortable one, as far as I am concerned. Then you will promise to help me with your influence with Mr. Logan and Captain Fawcett ? ”

“ I suppose I must, if you will let me have my grumble out first. Recollect, I enter my remonstrance ; I do not approve of your scheme in the least.”

“ You have made me understand that most fully.”

“ I denounce it as moral suicide.”

“ I call that exaggeration.”

"You are burying yourself alive under a mistaken notion of self-sacrifice; and mark my words, I am no true prophet if you do not live to repent it."

"On the contrary, I intend to be very happy. Cathy is going to help me with my garden, and we mean to read German together."

"I hope you will allow your friends to subscribe for your funeral if the crust should prove not quite so sufficing as you imagine?"

"You need not fear anything so tragic; Emmie and I mean to flourish on our crusts as much as Daniel and the three children did on their pulse and water," returned Queenie gaily, whose spirits had risen now her formidable task was achieved. "I shall speak to them both tomorrow, and get it off my mind," she had said to Cathy the previous night, when they had discussed the grand question in all its bearings, under cover of the summer darkness, and with the scent of Langley's roses steeping the air. "There is no time to be lost; Mr Logan is writing to Carlisle for a mistress, and I must speak to him at once."

Queenie's buoyancy had returned, but Garth remained silent. He had done his duty, and uttered his protest against this monstrous scheme, which, nevertheless, he was bound to further by all means in his power.

"Quixotic, absurd, girlish to the last degree," he muttered to himself, and yet he felt he respected and liked the girl all the better for her modest independence. Two days ago they had been strangers, and now they had entered on a mutual league of friendship and support. "I have promised to see you through this, so you may leave all business details to me," he said with a little condescension, which, in spite of everything, amused Queenie. "Half-measures are not in my line; if you want help from me you will be sure to get it," finished Garth; and Queenie felt amused and grateful in a breath.

Garth was a little silent after this; the young man felt an odd thrill, half painful and half pleasant, at the recognition of this new responsibility. This young stranger had unconsciously thrown herself upon his protection. In asking his advice she had appealed strongly to his gener-

osity. To be sure, Queenie would not have read matters in this light, indeed, would have rebelled at such a statement; but Garth judged otherwise. Tenderness to all weakness was inherent in his nature; women, children, and animals always trusted themselves involuntarily to him; his shoulders were broad enough to incur a mass of responsibility that would have crushed most people. "It was Garth's chief happiness to help people," his sisters always said. True, he must help them in his own way, and they must submit to his good-natured dictates, flavored a little arbitratively perhaps; but his sympathy and ready help would always be forthcoming. No one ever appealed to Garth Clayton's generosity in vain.

He was silent for a long time after this, revolving all sorts of schemes for the sisters' benefit. Once or twice, as she sat beside him, he glanced at her with kindly scrutiny. "She was not much like a village school-mistress," he thought, as he noted the quiet, refined face, the pretty figure, the brown dress enlivened with the knot of white rose-buds, the hat with the pheasant's plume. "Where has she picked up that air of

finish and elegance ? it struck me from the first. I suppose some fellows would give anything to be in my place," thought the young philosopher, a little elated, and yet puzzled at his own position. " She is very unlike Dora, quite a contrast ; they are neither of them pretty, at least not strictly so. Dora is the more attractive, but Miss Marriott's eyes are wonderful ; I never saw any in the least like them, not that I concern myself about such matters," finished the patriarch of eight-and-twenty, pulling his moustache with an amused air.

But for all that he roused himself rather reluctantly as Cathy and Mr. Logan came towards them, dragging a large basket of ferns between them. Cathy looked hot and flushed, and just a trifle perturbed. She left her hold of the basket a little impatiently, and flung herself down by Queenie.

" How provokingly cool you two look. Here have Ted and I been working like galley-slaves, until Mr. Logan chose to come and break in on our work."

" She was overtiring herself, so I took away

the trowel," returned Mr. Logan, with an expression of quiet humor. "Moderation in everything, Miss Catherine, even in fern-hunting. St. Paul's rule is the best."

"I like to be my own taskmaster," grumbled Cathy, who seemed to be in one of her impracticable moods. "Queen, for pity's sake come with me for a run across the moor. I have been so long with Miss Faith and Mr. Logan that I shall have a 'break out' directly, as the prison matron calls it, unless I associate for a little with less desperately good people. Moderation even in this is the best rule," continued Cathy aggravatingly, drawing up her graceful figure, and darting a defiant look at Mr. Logan. "After all, St. Paul was right; so come along, Queenie."

"Kitty, whatever has put you into such a bad temper?" asked her friend affectionately, linking her arm in the girl's as they crossed the tramway.

"I don't know; he treats me like a child, and I will not bear it. He puts me in one of my tantrums, and then pities and drives me wild with

that gentle way of his. I hate to feel so ashamed of myself, and he knows it."

"But what is it all about?" asked Queenie, a little bewildered at this sudden storm.

"Oh, I don't know, I never do know, that is just the aggravating part. I say something in my usual way, and then he puts me down and argues with me, and proves that he is right and I am wrong; and then when I get cross, and human nature won't bear such an amount of contradiction,—at least mine won't,—he just says I am tired, and takes away my trowel. I know all the time he is laughing at me in his quiet way, and saying to himself, 'that poor foolish child.'"

"But, Cathy, there is no harm in that."

"There is harm when I am no child, when I do not feel like one, when—but I won't talk about it any more. Let us have a race, Queen—one—two—three—away," and Cathy flew down the moor with a swift, bird-like movement, her small head erect, but not before Queenie had caught the gleam of something like a tear on one long eyelash.

Just then a whistle from Garth summoned the

scattered party together. The afternoon was far advanced ; some evening clouds skirted the edge of the moor ; the children were weary. The little engine steamed up slowly towards them, and all hands were busy in packing the hampers and baskets on the truck.

Cathy stood aside a little sulkily while the rest clambered into their places. Queenie, who was watching them, saw that Mr. Logan wanted to assist her, but Cathy would have none of his help ; she was therefore a little surprised when he followed her, and seated himself persistently by their side.

“ So you have not forgiven an old friend for having the best of an argument,” he said at last, after vainly trying to draw her in the conversation. Queenie had flung herself gallantly into the breach, but Cathy remained obstinately silent.

“ She is tired, Christopher, my dear,” suddenly interrupted Miss Cosie’s little chirping voice ; “ nothing is more wearying than talking when one wants their tea, and I am sure I want mine. Mrs. Fawcett has been saying the same thing just

now ; there, there, we shall get it presently, I dare say, and Langley always makes such beautiful tea, as I tell her."

"Are you tired, Miss Catherine ? then I will not talk to you any more," was the gentle reply, and Mr. Logan quietly turned his attention to Queenie.

The waggonettes were waiting for them at the entrance of the Warstdale works, and a short drive deposited them at the dark porch of Church-Stile House.

Mr. Logan was standing apart for a moment under the sycamore trees, when Cathy suddenly walked up to him. The girl's cheek was crimson, her eyes were still a little defiant. "Miss Cosie was wrong, I was not tired. I let you believe what was not true. I was only vexed and put out with myself, as I often am," wrinkling her smooth brow and speaking quickly.

"I am always sure to hear the truth at last from you, Miss Catherine," he replied, with a kind look and smile, as he held out his hand to her ; and then Cathy sprang away into the house.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## FAITH AND CHARITY.

" That thou may'st pray for them thy foes are given ;  
That thou may'st look to God I bring thee pain.  
I bring thee cares that thou may'st look to heaven ;  
I bring thee fretful friends that thou may'st train  
Thy soul to patience. What thou deemest gain  
When closest wreathing chains around thy soul  
I rend from thine own bleeding heart in twain,  
That He who bought may have thy spirit whole,  
Spurs that may give thee pain, but urge thee to the goal."

*Keble.*

THE evening festivities had been closed as usual by the family concert, during which Garth had distinguished himself with more than ordinary brilliancy.

Queenie had been a little thoughtful and absent, but she had no idea that her pre-occupation had been observed until she bade Garth good night, and he followed her into the little hall, and lighted her candle.

"What is the use of worrying yourself over a lot of unnecessary details?" he said, looking down at her with an elder-brotherly air. "Things can't be settled in a minute. Leave everything to me; I will see you through your difficulties. The best thing will be to put it all out of your head for a little while, until I give you leave to think of it."

"I will try; but it will not be very easy, when so much depends upon it," she returned, submissively.

They were standing alone together in the little square hall; a lamp burned dimly in a recess; the candle flared between them in the summer draught; a grey moth brushed round them. Outside was the shadow of the dark sycamores. A little runlet of water trickled audibly in the silence. Garth's broad shoulders seemed to block up the tiny hall; he towered above Queenie's slim, girlish figure, looking down upon her with condescending dignity, but with the gleam of real kindness in his eyes. As he held out his hand his firm, warm pressure seemed reassuring.

"That is all the more reason to leave it to

me. We business men are used to deal with difficulties. Nothing hurts me; I am strong enough to bear any amount of responsibility." And Queenie went up-stairs comforted.

Garth's assurance was not unnecessary. For some days nothing further passed between them on the subject of her project. Garth never alluded to it; and but for those few words Queenie might have felt uneasy. As it was she had some difficulty in keeping her restlessness down. It cost her an effort at times to appear unrestrained, and to join in the ordinary topics of conversation.

"I try to do as he tells me, and put it out of my mind; but it is so hard when so much depends upon it," she would say to Cathy when they retired for the night. "I hope it is not wrong; but I have set my heart on carrying out this scheme. I get fonder of this place every day, and so does Emmie. I never was so happy in my life!" finished Queenie, with a little sob of excitement.

" You dear old Queen! as though we ever meant to part with you! Have you really only

been here a week ? How I enjoy having you ; and Langley says the same. Never mind Garth's silence, his few words mean more than a whole hour of talk from any other man. If he says he will do a thing you may safely trust him."

"Yes ; I know ; but all the same, Mr. Logan may not think me suitable for such a post," persisted Queenie, disconsolately, "and then I shall be obliged to go back to Carlisle, and to part with Emmie. Oh, Cathy ! it does seem so hard, when we should be content with so little ;" and though Cathy helped her friend, and was very kind and sympathizing, there was no denying that the cause for suspense was a grave one.

Queenie had only stated the truth when she had owned she had never been happier in her life. For the first time she had tasted the real comfort of a happy, well-regulated home. Queenie's own youth had never known freedom from the carking fret of a narrow income and incessant burden of debt. The remembrance of the petty meanness, the shiftlessness, the continuous fight with untoward circumstance, made retrospect bitter to her. She had grown up strong and

sturdy, like some blooming Alpine plant which had taken root in a handful of earth on the edge of a crevasse ; the sunshine might be all about her, but it had not gilded her one point of rock.

Here there was plenty without profusion, comfort without pretension ; a happy family circle, rich in individuality, characteristic, strong in will, with a fount of pure native humor evidently engrained in the blood ; and yet there were fewer jars and less dissensions than ordinarily occur in domestic life.

Ted was evidently the malcontent of the household ; but even his grumbling, incessant as it was, had no root of bitterness in it. He was only a lazy, sweet-tempered fellow, who had not yet fitted himself to his niche in life, and who was young enough to quarrel with the monotony of his existence. "Look here ! I can't stand this much longer ; I shall have to cut it, after all, and take to office work in Carlisle," he would say, when he had secured the two girls as listeners, and had extended himself after his usual fashion on the long, narrow couch, with his arms under his head, and his light hair standing on end. "Do

you think a fellow of any spirit can endure life in a hole like this?"

"Oh, Ted, do be quiet; we are so tired of this sort of talk," remonstrated his sister.

"I am not talking to you; I am talking to Miss Marriott. She is a girl of sense, and knows what a fellow means when he says he is hipped, and all that. Do you think a place like Hepshaw is meant for anything but a refuge for old maids?"

"Oh, Teddie, you rude boy!"

"Don't interfere, Catherine; I am speaking to your betters."

"Your brother seems perfectly content with his surroundings; I should advise you to follow his example," returned Queenie demurely, trying hard not to laugh, and not unmindful of the boyish kicks that were being administered to the end of the sofa.

"Garth! Oh, he is different; he is a confirmed old bachelor, a sort of philosopher on a small scale. I don't believe Garth would trouble himself if he never saw a fresh face from one year's end to another. A man with a hobby is

always to be envied," sighed the poor victim of circumstance.

"Get a hobby, then," snapped Cathy.

"Oh, it is all very easy to talk."

"I know it is, or you would not lie railing there, like the melancholy Jacques, against fate. 'I met a fool,' quoth he, 'a motley fool.'"

"'Call me not fool till heaven has sent me fortune,'" growled Ted, with the spirit of reviving fun in his eyes.

"There, he is better now; when he begins to quote we may safely leave him, Queenie. I want you to come with me and call on the Cardinal Virtues; it is such a wet afternoon that they will be in strong force. Never mind Ted's grumbling, he cannot expect you to stay at home and talk to him; besides, he has 'David Copperfield' to amuse him."

"I'll pay you out for this," returned her brother, viciously. "Just as Miss Marriott and I had found out we were kindred spirits, and all that sort of thing.

'Oh, woman! in your hour of ease  
A wretched bore, or else a tease;

When pain and sickness wring the brow  
A downright duffer then art thou.'

Wasn't the old Caledonian one when he praised up the weaker portion of the community in that ridiculous fashion ?" but as Cathy did not descend to reply, the passage of arms stopped.

The sisterhood were all gathered in the pleasant parlor at the Evergreens. A bright-eyed, faded little woman lay on the couch in the bay window knitting some bright-coloured strips for an antimacassar. She looked up and nodded pleasantly as the friends entered.

" You always come to us on a wet afternoon, Catherine, when visitors are most welcome. Faith was reading to us ; I dare say she will be glad of a rest by this time. We are in the fourth volume of D'Aubigné's 'Reformation.' Put a marker in the place, Faith, and then we shall lose no time when we open the book again. Do you know D'Aubigné, Miss Marriott ? it is most improving reading for young people."

" Could this active-looking, talkative little woman be the hopeless invalid of whom she had heard so much ?" Queenie asked herself, with

some bewilderment, as she sat down in the comfortable chair that Miss Faith brought to her. Though it was summer a little fire burned in the grate ; the window had been closed to exclude the dampness. Miss Faith's cheeks looked unusually pale ; her eyes were full of a soft weariness.

“ Charity is so fond of D'Aubigné ; I think he tires me a little. It is very good reading, of course ; but in this summer weather, and with the drip, drip of the rain on the leaves—”

“ There were giants in those days,” broke in Miss Hope, vigorously. “ Luther was a grand man, and so was Zwingle.” Miss Hope spoke in a loud but not unpleasing voice. She was a stout, fresh - colored woman, not without a certain degree of comeliness. In her young days she had been too high-coloured for beauty, but now the grey hair toned and softened her down.

Miss Prudence was less pleasing : she was tall and angular, wore spectacles, and had that slight appendage on the upper lip which is not a strictly feminine adjunct. Her voice was thin

in quality and somewhat harsh. Queenie felt that Ted's *soubriquet* of "the dragon" was not badly bestowed. It was she who held the purse-strings of the little household, and who guarded the proprieties. Miss Hope, in spite of her strong leaning to the Plymouth Brothers, and her somewhat injudicious tyrannies in the matter of temperance and total abstinence, was far less rigid than her strong-minded sister.

No wonder Miss Faith drooped in such an atmosphere! and then Miss Charity's voice! Queenie, who was sensitive on such matters, found fault with the ceaseless flow of words that proceeded from the bay-window. "She is egotistical, selfish; she works that poor sister of hers to death, I know she does," thought the girl to herself, with a certain youthful antagonism against oppression. "Miss Faith is a saint; but I wonder how she can bear it."

Queenie was a little hard in her judgment, as young people often are in their estimate of things and people. There was selfishness, and possibly oppression, in the continual sisterly sacrifice demanded as a right; in the unpitying claims

made on the health and time so ungrudgingly bestowed upon her.

In life, real life, we see these sort of sacrifices perpetually exacted before our eyes somehow. Human flesh and blood revolts against the sight. The strong, sometimes the young, compelled to put away their own life, and spend some of their best years chained to the couch of helplessness ; condemned to share the burthen of an invalid existence ; exposed to petty tyrannies and tempers, and bearing them out of pity for the suffering that provokes them.

Sometimes, indeed, it may be a labor of love, a life within a life, of many-folded sweet-nesses blossoming out of the pain, as in the case of an afflicted parent or husband. Nay, one often see admirable lives of sisterly or brotherly devotion. Yet are there sadder cases, when duty and not love is the main-spring of action ; when the self-sacrifice is bitter though voluntary ; when the watcher would willingly change places with the watched, that the bounding pulse of health might be subdued ; that the keen suffering of repression and yearning, and God

only knows what bitter measure of woman's pain, might be dulled and quieted by mere bodily weakness.

To be free, only to be free, and live their own lives—that is what some women vainly crave ; and then a stone is given them for bread. Instead of work comes waiting—the hardest and most trying form of work ; instead of freedom a mesh of finely-woven duties, light as gossamer threads, yet binding the conscience like cartropes.

Queenie sat and mused with inward rebellion while Charity talked about her books, and showed her manuscript volumes of finely-copied extracts. “I always write out passages that please me ; it is such a resource to read them afterwards. I want Faith to do the same, but she likes mending and watering her flowers. I prefer thoughts to flowers, Miss Marriott.”

“ Every one has a right to their taste. I think I share Miss Faith's,” returned the girl, a little ungraciously. She felt no pity for the bright-eyed, faded little woman, who made so much of her life, and hid away her sufferings bravely,

much as the silk, patched coverlet hid the useless shrunken limbs.

She would not even allow to Cathy that she could have ever been pretty, as they walked home together through the summer rain.

"Her face does not attract me in the least, there is nothing in it; and then her cheek-bones are so high, and her curls are so thin and limp. Now, if she only braided them nicely under a little close cap—and then her tongue; oh, Cathy! I think she would drive me distracted in a week."

But Cathy stood up stoutly for Miss Charity.

"I must say that I think you a little prejudiced," she returned, with honest indignation, and that natural love of opposition that incites young people to do battle for the accused. She did not love Miss Charity in the least; but, nevertheless, her sense of justice prompted her to take up her defence. "She is nice-looking now, every one says so; and when she was young she was more than pretty, positively beautiful, before she met with her accident."

"Was it an accident that caused her illness?"

"Yes ; she was a strong healthy girl, just like us, fresh-colored and blooming ; and her hair used to be so pretty,—it was just that paler tinge of gold that one sees with fair complexions, and now the color seems all worked out of it. She used to be called the pretty Miss Palmer ; and then she was the only one of the four sisters who were ever engaged."

"Oh, Cathy, I thought you told me that there was no one for them to marry !"

"I forgot Miss Charity's affair ; she was engaged to a young farmer in Wythiedale. I fancy he was a rough-and-ready sort of person ; but I believe she was fond of him, poor thing, and then her accident happened."

"What sort of accident ?"

"Oh, she fell down the granary steps when she was spending the day at his father's. It was a dreadful affair ; partial paralysis set in, and there was a complication, and a great deal of suffering ; and then the doctor said it was hopeless, and she was obliged to give him up."

"Oh, poor Miss Charity !" ejaculated Queenie, with tears in her eyes. She could have gone

back and asked her pardon on the spot for all the hard things she had thought. "I never dreamt of trouble like this ; I can hardly bear to hear of it. What became of the poor fellow ? "

"That is the worst part of all," replied Cathy, rather reluctantly ; "his end was very miserable. He broke his neck when he was out hunting. His horse fell, in trying to jump a five-barred gate, and rolled over on him. Some people said he was not quite sober when it happened. Whether he grew reckless from the loss of her, or whether, as it is strongly suspected, he was addicted to intemperance from the first, I cannot possibly tell ; but I rather think that she must have been deceived in him. Of course no one was cruel enough to hint at such a thing to her ; and so she treasures the memory of her poor George, as she calls him."

"But, Cathy, what a terrible tragedy ! "

"Yes ; she was very ill for a time ; and then Miss Faith gave up her hospital, and came home to nurse her. Of course it sounds very bad, and the poor thing has suffered a good deal one way and another ; but how do you know that it was

not all for the best ? ” finished Cathy, solemnly. “ Think if that accident had never happened, and she had married him, and then found that he was not worthy. To be tied for life to a man, and then to see him sink lower and lower, to despise one’s own husband ! Could you imagine any greater torment than that ? If it were I, I know I should get to hate him. Nothing should make me live with such a man ; I would beg my bread first,” cried the girl, with sparkling eyes, and setting her small white teeth together. “ To despise one’s husband ! oh, Queenie, think how dreadful ! ”

“ I don’t suppose such a thing could happen to either of us. Poor Miss Charity ! perhaps it was a blessing in disguise after all ; but to think of caring for D’Aubignés ‘ Reformation ’, and copying out all those rubbishing extracts, after living through such a tragedy as that ! it seems so incomprehensible.”

“ Do you think the sun and the moon ought to have stood still in her little firmament ? don’t you know hearts are broken every day, and the world goes on just as usual ? ” returned Cathy,

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sententiously. She and Queenie seemed to have changed characters that afternoon ; it was Cathy who was calm and philosophical. At another time her old-fashioned wisdom would have provoked a smile, but Queenie was too much in earnest.

“I should have thought her story would have been more plainly written in her face. If it had been Miss Faith now—Cathy, you look queer ; has Miss Faith ever had a story too ?”

“Well, not exactly. I don’t know, no one does ; but I always fancied there was some attraction beside the sick children in that hospital. Langley’s suspicions were aroused when she went over to Carlisle once ; but she would not like me to repeat such nonsense.”

“But why should I not know ? Oh, Cath ! there could never be any harm in telling me.”

“Well, as it was ten years ago, perhaps not. I don’t know what made Langley say such a thing, but she spoke to me once of a dark young surgeon, who came up to them in the ward, and talked to them for a long time. Langley said nothing crossed her mind until she saw him look

at Miss Faith, and then, somehow, the thought got into her mind."

"Nothing but a look?"

"My dear, there is a great deal to be read in looks," returned Cathy, demurely. "It was just the beginning, I dare say, of a possible romance. When Miss Charity's trouble happened, and poor Miss Faith came home to nurse her, every one said it was grief at her sister's state that made her so grave and unlike herself; but Langley always believes that that dark young surgeon had something to do with it, and so do I. I dare say this was one of the 'might-have-beens' that have spoiled many women's lives."

"But Miss Faith is not so old,—only five-and-thirty,—and she is still so sweet-looking."

"My dear, we are speaking of mere looks, and ten years ago; most likely he has married and has half-a-dozen children by this time; and remember, they have never even met since. Perhaps he has grown stout and bald, those dark young men do get stout sometimes. I am a little cynical, but I cannot believe in such faithfulness as that. Men are such fickle crea-

tures, my dear, ‘out of sight is out of mind’ with most of them.”

“Pray where did you learn those abominable sentiments?” asked her brother curtly, as he came up behind the girls, starting them into a muttered exclamation of dismay. How much had he overheard? how was it that his footsteps had gained upon them unperceived? Quick blushes burnt in the girls’ faces. Garth shook off the raindrops and laughed mischievously; he was master of the situation, his love of teasing was paramount.

“Girls are all alike. Fancy men talking to each other about their love affairs, and choosing a public thoroughfare for the tender confidence.”

“Garth, you are a monster, and I hate you,” burst out Cathy, stamping her little foot at him.

“Mr. Clayton is utterly mistaken,” observed Queenie hotly; “we were only discussing other people’s affairs. We are not often in such a gossiping mood, but Cathy was communicative, and I suppose I got interested.”

“Is it also your opinion that men are such fickle creatures? I thought that was Cathy’s

observation. She has known so many men, and has such a wide acquaintance with life. I should have thought Miss Titheridge and the dragon-guarded portals of Granite Lodge would have excluded the stronger and ruder sex, but perhaps I am mistaken."

"Garth, when you are in this mood I detest you."

"I cannot have you infecting Miss Marriott's mind with such heterodox notions ; fickleness is all on the other side, take my word for it. I am sorry that I only overheard the last words, as Cathy's communications would doubtless have proved both novel and instructive ; a school-girl's opinion on such points must be delicious. Cathy, my dear, if you can spare Miss Marriott one moment I have a word or two to say to her. Step into my den there, please, while I hang up my wet coat. I will be with you in a moment."

Queenie obeyed him wonderingly. She had been in Garth's den before, Cathy had taken her, but she looked round it with fresh interest.

There were the book-shelves he had made and stained himself, loaded with his favorite authors

—Dickens, Thackeray, and Macaulay, “fine fellows all of them,” he would say ; and his writing-table with all its old bachelor’s appurtenances,—the pipe-rack and red earthen tobacco-jar ; and the worn easy-chair, the shabbiest and the most comfortable in the house. Opposite was the picture of his mother, a large faded oil-painting of a woman, not young, but with a sweet gentle face and Garth’s blue-grey eyes.

Queenie looked at it for some time, and then she went to the window. A little bird was singing through the rain, the drops splashed endlessly from the white-rose bush under the window ; the steep lawn planted sparsely with trees ran down to the lane. Langley’s jessamine and clove-pink steeped the wet air with fragrance ; a half-drowned bee clung to a spray of woodbine. “ Most people would call this dull ; and how they would hate that little gate leading to the church-yard, and the thought of that granite monument shining in the moonlight, but to me it is the dearest place,” thought Queenie, leaning against the window-frame in sweet abstraction.

“ Are you there, Miss Marriott ? I am so sorry

to have kept you waiting," observed Garth apologetically, coming to her side in his quick way. "Langley detained me with some questions of domestic detail that could not be postponed."

"It does not matter, I was in no hurry. Look at that bee, Mr. Clayton; I was just going out to rescue him; he is shipwrecked, and wants to save his cargo of honey."

"You shall go to him by-and-bye. I only want to say a word to you. I have talked to Mr. Logan, and everything is arranged. In a month from this time you are to enter on your new duties as mistress of the Hepshaw girls' school."

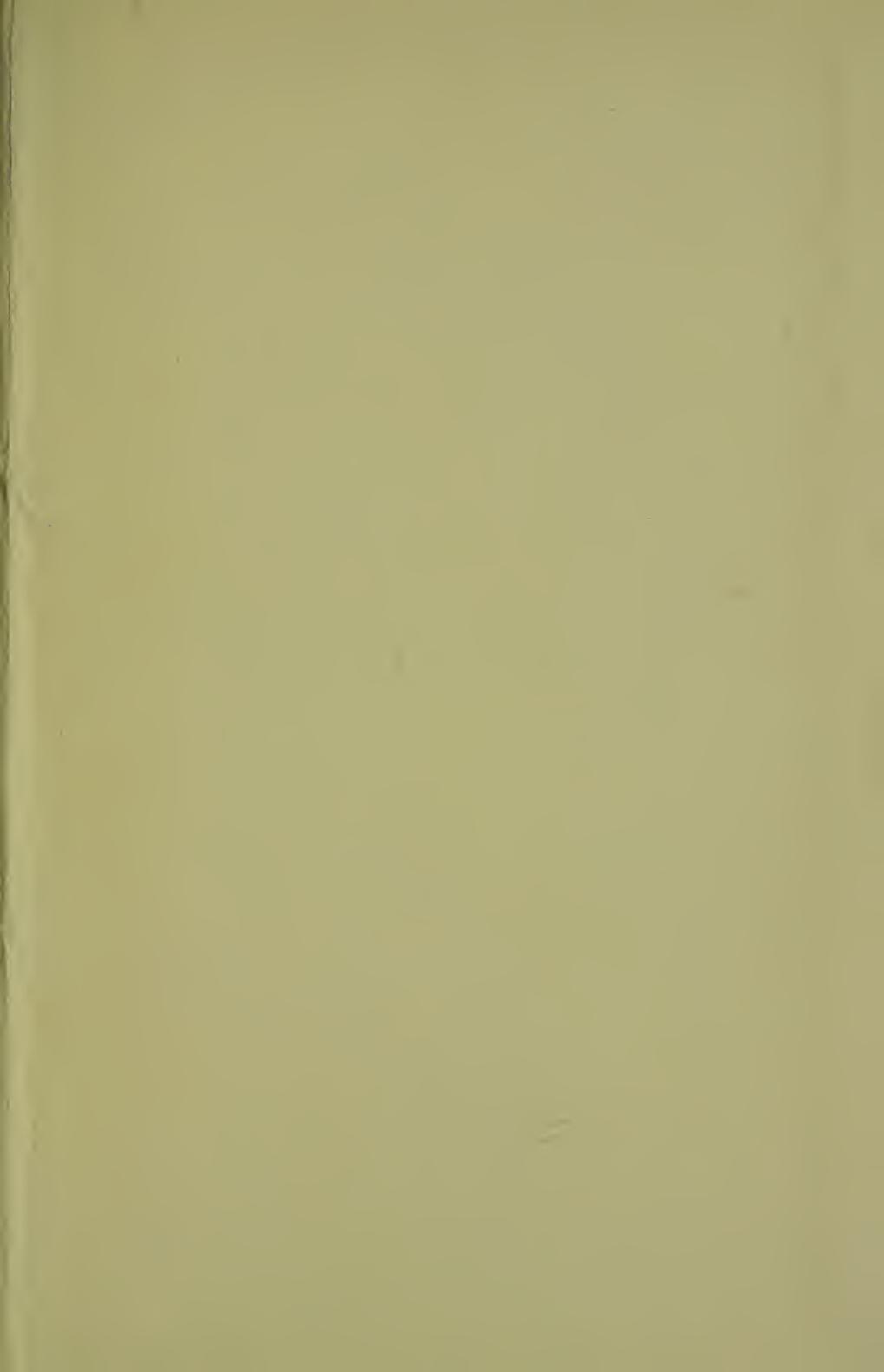
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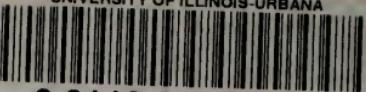
124







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